United Nations S/2018/643

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 June 2018

Original: English

France: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Recalling its previous resolutions, in particular resolution 2360 (2017), and the statements of its President concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC),

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the DRC as well as all States in the region and *emphasizing* the need to respect fully the principles of non-interference, good neighbourliness and regional cooperation,

Taking note of the final report (S/2018/531) of the Group of Experts on the DRC ("the Group of Experts") established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) and extended pursuant to resolutions 1807 (2008), 1857 (2008), 1896 (2009), 1952 (2010), 2021 (2011), 2078 (2012), 2136 (2014), 2198 (2015), 2293 (2016) and 2360 (2017),

Reiterating the need for the Government of the DRC to swiftly and fully investigate the killing of the two members of the Group of Experts and the four Congolese nationals accompanying them and bring those responsible to justice, *welcoming* the Secretary General's commitment that the United Nations will do everything possible to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice, *further welcoming* the work of the United Nations team deployed to assist the Congolese authorities in their investigations, in agreement with the Congolese authorities, and *calling* for continued cooperation,

Determining that the situation in the DRC continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region,

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

1. *Decides* to renew until 1 July 2019 the measures as set out in paragraphs 1 to 6 of resolution 2293 (2016), including its reaffirmations therein;

2. *Reaffirms* that measures described in paragraph 5 of resolution 2293 (2016) shall apply to individuals and entities as designated by the Committee, as set forth in paragraph 7 of resolution 2293 (2016) and paragraph 3 of resolution 2360 (2017);

3. *Decides* to extend until 1 August 2019 the mandate of the Group of Experts, as set forth in paragraph 6 of Resolution 2360, *expresses its intention* to review the mandate and take appropriate action regarding the further extension no later than 1 July 2019, and *requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary administrative measures as expeditiously as possible to re-establish the Group of

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Experts, in consultation with the Committee, drawing, as appropriate, on the expertise of the members of the Group established pursuant to previous resolutions;

4. *Requests* the Group of Experts to provide to the Council, after discussion with the Committee, a mid-term report no later than 30 December 2018, and a final report no later than 15 June 2019, as well as submit monthly updates to the Committee, except in the months where the mid-term and final reports are due;

5. *Reaffirms* the reporting provisions as set out in resolution 2360 (2017);

6. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

United Nations S/2018/644

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 June 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 27 June 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the fifty-seventh monthly report by the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The report covers the period from 24 May to 22 June 2018.

The destruction of the remaining two chemical weapons production facilities, of the 27 declared in total, is now under way. I take note of the statement by the Director General that one of the two remaining facilities has been destroyed, although its destruction has yet to be verified by the OPCW Technical Secretariat. I welcome the completion of the required arrangements for the destruction of the remaining facility.

I note, with continuing regret, that the outstanding issues related to the declaration and further submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic remain unresolved, and that the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet responded in that regard to the letter dated 10 April 2018 from the Director General. I further note that OPCW has begun planning for inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports. I strongly encourage the Syrian Arab Republic to extend its full cooperation to OPCW.

Once again, I find myself expressing abhorrence over the use of chemical weapons. On 13 June 2018, another report of the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic was issued and subsequently transmitted to the Security Council (S/2018/620, enclosure). In that report, the fact-finding mission stated that the nerve agent sarin was very likely used as a chemical weapon in Ltamenah on 24 March 2017 and that chlorine was very likely used as a chemical weapon at Ltamenah Hospital and the surrounding area on 25 March 2017.

I further note that the investigation of the fact-finding mission into allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Duma on 7 April 2018 is continuing and that the fact-finding mission continues to study all available information relating to other allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Once again, I must reiterate that the use of chemical weapons, by any party to the conflict, is without justification and is wholly unacceptable, and that those responsible for these acts must be held to account.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 24 May to 22 June 2018 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Note by the Director-General

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

Background

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria, along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. This, the fifty-seventh monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 May 2018 to 22 June 2018.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

6. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. Just prior to the cut-off date of this report, one of the two remaining CWPFs was

destroyed, and its destruction is yet to be verified by the Secretariat. The Secretariat, together with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), has completed the required arrangements to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in the destruction of the remaining CWPF. Preparatory work for this destruction is under way, but is dependent on the prevailing security conditions.

(b) On 20 June 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its fifty-fifth monthly report (EC-88/P/NAT.4, dated 20 June 2018) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

7. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

8. During the reporting period, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continued its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5.

9. As noted by the Director-General in his report "Status of Implementation of Executive Council Decision EC-83/DEC.5 (dated 11 November 2016)" (EC-88/DG.13, dated 14 June 2018), the Secretariat has begun planning the inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports, in accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5. The Secretariat also continues to monitor the security situation through the United Nations Department of Safety and Security to identify permissive security conditions for those inspections.

10. With regard to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Director-General in the aforementioned report provided information on the status of the Secretariat's two rounds of inspections that were conducted at each of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in 2017 and, also as previously reported, noted that the results of the analysis of samples taken during those inspections did not indicate the presence of scheduled chemicals, and that the inspection teams did not observe any activities inconsistent with obligations under the Convention. The Director-General also noted that, as each of these facilities are to be inspected twice per year in accordance with paragraph 11 of EC-83/DEC.5, two rounds of inspections are due in 2018.

11. With regard to paragraph 6 and subparagraph 12(b) of the Council decision, the Director-General reported to the Council at its Eighty-Seventh Session concerning the results of the DAT's analysis of the documents submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic on 10 November 2017 (EC-87/DG.16, dated 23 February 2018). As reported previously, in a letter to Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, Dr. Faisal Mekdad, dated 10 April 2018, the Director-General reiterated that unanswered questions remained and that these require a response. The Director-General also repeated his request to the Syrian authorities to provide all necessary information that would assist in clarifying the remaining issues associated with the declarations and further submissions of the Syrian Arab Republic. As at the cut-off date of this report, the Director-General had not received a response from the Syrian Arab Republic to the letter of 10 April 2018.

Other activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

12. UNOPS continues to provide support to the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement.

13. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Supplementary resources

14. As previously reported, the Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the OPCW FFM and other remaining activities, such as those of the DAT. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 17.1 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

15. The FFM, during its deployment to gather facts related to the alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017, received samples and additional information related to a number of allegations that toxic chemicals were used as weapons in Ltamenah, in the Hama Governorate. The FFM, as detailed in the Secretariat's Note entitled "Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding Alleged Incidents in Ltamenah, the Syrian Arab Republic, 24 and 25 March 2017" (S/1636/2018*, dated 13 June 2018), concluded that sarin was very likely used as a chemical weapon in the south of Ltamenah on 24 March 2017. The report also notes that the FFM determined that chlorine was released from cylinders through mechanical impact, and concluded that chlorine was very likely used as a chemical weapon at Ltamenah hospital and the surrounding area on 25 March 2017.

16. With regard to the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Douma on 7 April 2018, the FFM continues to analyse all available information, including information gathered during the course of its deployments to the Syrian Arab Republic.

17. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 23 November 2015), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to the allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Conclusion

18. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues; the verification of the destruction of the two stationary above-ground facilities; and annual inspections of the underground structures already verified as destroyed.

United Nations S/2018/645

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 June 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 25 June 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Office to the African Union, established on 1 July 2010 by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/288.

Following the usual consultations, I should like to inform you of my intention to appoint Sahle-Work Zewde (Ethiopia) as my Special Representative to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, at the level of Under-Secretary-General.

Ms. Zewde will succeed Haile Menkerios, whose assignment will end on 30 June 2018. I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Menkerios for his dedicated service to the Organization and his effective leadership of the Office.

I should be grateful if you would bring this matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

18-10612 (E) 280618

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United Nations S/2018/646

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 June 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 27 June 2018 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that your letter dated 25 June 2018 (S/2018/645) concerning your intention to appoint Sahle-Work Zewde (Ethiopia) as your Special Representative to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, at the level of Under-Secretary-General, has been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council. They take note of the intention expressed in your letter.

(*Signed*) Vassily A. **Nebenzia**
President of the Security Council

18-10614 (E) 280618

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United Nations S/2018/647

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 June 2018

Original: English

Russian Federation and United States of America: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Noting with concern that the situation in the Middle East is tense and is likely to remain so, unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) of 11 June 2018 (S/2018/550) and also reaffirming its resolution 1308 (2000) of 17 July 2000,

Stressing that both parties must abide by the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and scrupulously observe the ceasefire,

Concurring with the Secretary-General's findings that the ongoing military activities conducted by any actor in the area of separation continue to have the potential to escalate tensions between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, jeopardize the ceasefire between the two countries, and pose a risk to the local civilian population and United Nations personnel on the ground,

Expressing alarm that recent escalation of violence in the Syrian Arab Republic risks a serious conflagration of the conflict in the region

Expressing grave concern at all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement,

Stressing that there should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF,

Strongly condemning the continued fighting in the area of separation, *calling* on all parties to the Syrian domestic conflict to cease military actions in the UNDOF area of operations and to respect international humanitarian law,

Condemning the use of heavy weapons by both the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the ongoing Syrian conflict in the area of separation, including the use of tanks by the Syrian armed forces and opposition during clashes,

Echoing the Secretary-General's call upon all parties to the Syrian domestic conflict to cease military actions throughout the country, including in the UNDOF area of operations,

Reaffirming its readiness to consider listing individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities providing support to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) or to the Al-Nusra Front (also known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham), including those who are financing, arming, planning, or recruiting for ISIL or the Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with ISIL and Al-Qaida as listed on the ISIL

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(Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List, including those participating in or otherwise supporting attacks against UNDOF peacekeepers,

Recognizing the necessity of efforts to flexibly adjust UNDOF's posture on a temporary basis to minimize the security risk to UNDOF personnel as UNDOF continues to implement its mandate, while emphasizing that the ultimate goal is for the peacekeepers to return to their positions in UNDOF's area of operations as soon as practicable,

Emphasizing the importance of Security Council and troop-contributing countries having access to reports and information related to UNDOF's current temporary configuration, and reinforcing that such information assists the Security Council with evaluating, mandating, and reviewing UNDOF and with effective consultation with troop-contributing countries,

Underscoring the need for UNDOF to have at its disposal all necessary means and resources to carry out its mandate safely and securely, including technology and equipment to enhance its observation of the area of separation and the ceasefire line, and to improve force protection, as appropriate, and *recalling* that the theft of United Nations weapons and ammunition, vehicles and other assets, and the looting and destruction of United Nations facilities, are unacceptable,

Expressing its profound appreciation to UNDOF's military and civilian personnel, including those from Observer Group Golan, for their service in an increasingly challenging operating environment, *underscoring* the important contribution UNDOF's continued presence makes to peace and security in the Middle East, *welcoming* steps taken to enhance the safety and security of UNDOF, including Observer Group Golan, personnel, and *stressing* the need for continued vigilance to ensure the safety and security of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel,

Strongly condemning incidents threatening the safety and security of United Nations personnel,

Expressing its appreciation to UNDOF, including Observer Group Golan, for the ongoing efforts made towards the reestablishment of its headquarters at Camp Faouar and limited patrolling in its vicinity, and to upgrade and expand its positions on Mount Hermon, including the establishment of new positions,

Taking note of the Secretary-General's plan for UNDOF to return to vacated positions on the Bravo side based on a continuous assessment of security in the area of separation and its surroundings, and continued discussion and coordination with the parties,

Recalls that UNDOF's deployment and the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement are steps toward a just and durable peace on the basis of Security Council Resolution 338 (1973),

Recalling its request of the Secretary-General to ensure that data related to the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, including peacekeeping performance data, is used to improve analytics and the evaluation of mission operations, based on clear and well identified benchmarks,

Recalling resolution 2242 (2015) and its aspiration to increase the number of women in military and police contingents of United Nations peacekeeping operations,

1. *Calls upon* the parties concerned to implement immediately its resolution 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973;

2. *Stresses* the obligation on both parties to scrupulously and fully respect the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, calls on the parties to exercise maximum restraint and prevent any breaches of the ceasefire and the area of separation, *encourages* the parties to take advantage of UNDOF's liaison

function regularly to address issues of mutual concern, as appropriate, and *underscores* that there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation, including military operations by the Syrian Arab Armed Forces;

3. *Underlines* that there should be no military activity of the armed opposition groups in the area of separation, and *urges* Member States to convey strongly to the Syrian armed opposition groups in UNDOF's area of operations that UNDOF remains an impartial entity and to halt all activities that endanger United Nations peacekeepers on the ground and to accord the United Nations personnel on the ground the freedom to carry out their mandate safely and securely;

4. *Calls on* all groups other than UNDOF to abandon all UNDOF positions and the Quneitra crossing point, and return the peacekeepers' vehicles, weapons, and other equipment;

5. *Calls on* all parties to cooperate fully with the operations of UNDOF, to respect its privileges and immunities and to ensure its freedom of movement, as well as the security of and unhindered and immediate access for the United Nations personnel carrying out their mandate, including the unimpeded delivery of UNDOF equipment and the temporary use of alternative ports of entry and departure, as required, to ensure safe and secure troop rotation and resupply activities, in conformity with existing agreements, and urges prompt reporting by the Secretary-General to the Security Council and troop-contributing countries of any actions that impede UNDOF's ability to fulfil its mandate;

6. *Notes* the importance of the temporary crossing point for UNDOF personnel between the Alpha and Bravo sides for contingency situations, in the absence of the established crossing at Quneitra, and in this regard, *calls on* the parties to constructively engage with UNDOF, with the understanding that the Quneitra crossing will be re-opened as soon as security conditions permit;

7. *Welcomes* UNDOF's ongoing return to Camp Faouar and limited patrolling around Camp Faouar, as well as the cooperation of the parties to facilitate this return, together with continued efforts to plan for UNDOF's expeditious return to vacated positions in the area of separation, including the provision of adequate force protection, based on a continuous assessment of security in the area;

8. *Underscores* the importance of progress in the deployment of appropriate technology, including counter-improvised explosive device (IED) capabilities and a sense and warn system, as well as in addressing civilian staffing needs, to ensure the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and equipment, following appropriate consultations with the parties, and *notes* in this regard that the Secretary-General's proposal for such technologies has been delivered to the parties for approval;

9. *Encourages* the parties to the Disengagement Agreement to engage constructively to make the necessary temporary arrangements with UNDOF for the force's return to vacated positions, taking into account existing agreements;

10. *Welcomes* the initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General to standardise a culture of performance in UN peacekeeping, calls on him to continue his efforts to develop an integrated performance policy framework and apply it to UNDOF, and *requests* the Secretary-General seek to increase the number of women in UNDOF, as well as to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of operations;

11. *Welcomes* the efforts being undertaken by UNDOF to implement the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure full compliance of its personnel with the United Nations code of conduct, *requests* the Secretary-General to continue to take all necessary action in this regard and to keep the Security Council informed, and *urges* troop-

contributing countries to take preventive and disciplinary action to ensure that such acts are properly investigated and punished in cases involving their personnel;

12. *Decides* to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a period of six months, that is, until 31 December 2018, and *requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that UNDOF has the required capacity and resources to fulfil the mandate in a safe and secure way;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement resolution 338 (1973).

United Nations S/2018/648

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 June 2018

Original: English

Implementation of paragraph 6 of resolution 1956 (2010)

Fourteenth report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution 1956 (2010), in which the Council requested me to provide written reports every six months about the United Nations Compensation Fund, with effect from 1 January 2012, evaluating the continued compliance with the provisions of paragraph 21 of resolution 1483 (2003), which requires Iraq to deposit 5 per cent of the proceeds from export sales of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas into the Fund. This present fourteenth report covers the developments following the issuance of my thirteenth report (S/2017/1095) on 27 December 2017.

II. Developments

2. As previously indicated, the Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission adopted decision 276 (2017) in November 2017. The decision provides for deposits of oil proceeds into the Compensation Fund to resume in 2018 at a rate of 0.5 per cent in 2018, 1.5 per cent in 2019 and 3 per cent in 2020, until the outstanding compensation award has been paid in full.

3. In accordance with the decision, deposits resumed in January 2018, with the first quarterly payment to Kuwait since October 2014 made on 20 April 2018. With that payment of $90 million, the overall amount of compensation paid to date by the Compensation Commission stands at $47.9 billion, leaving some $4.5 billion to be paid to settle the last remaining claim.

4. On 25 April 2018, the Governing Council held its eighty-fourth session. At the opening plenary meeting, the delegation of Iraq reaffirmed the Government's commitment to meeting its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Council welcomed the resumption of deposits and expressed its appreciation therefor to the Government of Iraq. The Council also commended the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait on their cooperation with regard to the compensation still to be paid.

5. In conclusion, I should like to echo the Governing Council and note with appreciation the commitment of the Government of Iraq to fulfilling its compensation obligations. I also welcome the resumption of deposits to the Compensation Fund and of payments towards settling the last remaining claim.

18-10207 (E) 290618

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United Nations S/2018/649

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 June 2018

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2018 and provides an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel. It also outlines the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and progress made in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. In addition, it provides an update on the situation in the Lake Chad basin, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2349 (2017).

II. Developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel

2. During the reporting period, the peace and security landscape in West Africa and the Sahel continued to be dominated by the security situations in Mali, Nigeria and the Niger and by rising insecurity in Burkina Faso. Throughout the Sahel, violent conflicts between nomadic herders and sedentary agrarian communities increased in frequency, intensity, complexity and geographic scope. Moreover, the growing threat of cross-border armed groups and transnational organized crime continued to be compounded by weak State institutions and the inadequate provision of public services.

3. At the same time, major milestones were achieved as peaceful democratic transitions occurred in Liberia and Sierra Leone and local elections were held in the Gambia. However, post-electoral violence in Guinea, a breakdown in dialogue in the Niger, the slow pace of the dialogue process to resolve the constitutional crisis in Togo and increasing tensions surrounding upcoming elections in a number of countries are reminders of the fragility of democratic gains in the region. Moreover, while macroeconomic growth has generally improved, it has not yet translated into the implementation of meaningful democratic reforms.

A. Political and governance trends

4. In Burkina Faso, the trial of 84 individuals implicated in the coup attempt of 16 September 2015 began on 27 February 2018. Slow progress has been made in the proceedings and they have been repeatedly adjourned, in part due to procedural concerns raised by the defendants. During the reporting period, social tensions intensified as workers' strikes increased in various public service sectors.

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5. In Côte d'Ivoire, elections for 66 of the 99 senators in the upper chamber of Parliament took place on 24 March without the participation of the opposition, who boycotted the process. In line with his constitutional prerogatives, the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Dramane Ouattara, should appoint the remaining 33 senators. The Senate held its inaugural session on 5 April, during which the former Minister of State for Political Dialogue and Relations with Institutions, Jeannot Ahoussou-Kouadio, was elected as its President. On 12 April, the six members of the ruling coalition signed an agreement to form a unified political party to be called Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix. It has not yet been endorsed by all the members of the coalition.

6. The Gambia held peaceful local and municipal elections on 12 April and 12 May, respectively. All parties in the ruling coalition competed in their individual capacities. The United Democratic Party, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ousainou Darboe, won the majority of seats, while the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction of former President Yahya Jammeh obtained less than 15 per cent of seats. Meanwhile, the Government has continued to make progress in a number of reform processes, including in the areas of security sector reform and transitional justice.

7. Local elections held in Guinea on 4 February took place in a relatively stable environment. However, the results were strongly contested by opposition parties, who took to the streets in protest, which resulted in at least 12 fatalities. On 16 May, the leader of the opposition, Cellou Dalein Diallo, announced the suspension of demonstrations. He stated, however, that the opposition would continue to boycott the follow-up committee established pursuant to the political agreement of 12 October 2016, citing the slow progress made in the resolution of disagreements related to the local elections. Following the resignation of the former Prime Minister, Mamady Youla, on 21 May, the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, appointed Ibrahima Kassory Fofana as the new Prime Minister.

8. In Liberia, George Manneh Weah was sworn in as President on 22 January. His inauguration marked the first time in the history of Liberia that power was transferred from an elected President to an elected successor. Preparations for senatorial by-elections in Bong and Montserrado counties to fill the vacated seats of Mr. Weah and Vice-President Jewel Howard Taylor continued during the reporting period. Meanwhile, on 25 April, the Government agreed to reduce the salaries of ministers and Government officials.

9. On 26 February, the President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, announced that he would not run for a third term in the presidential election to be held in 2019. Subsequently, the main opposition actors declared their intention to participate in regional and legislative elections set for the second half of 2018, contrary to their previous decision to boycott the polls. On 13 May, opposition groups and civil society members held a demonstration in Nouakchott calling for the dissolution of the Independent National Electoral Commission. Former Senator and member of the opposition, Mohamed Ould Ghadda, who was arrested in August 2017 on corruption charges, remained in prison without trial.

10. The situation in the Niger remained tense owing to a breakdown in political dialogue between the Government and the opposition and popular discontent over difficult socio-economic conditions. On 25 March, protesters held a demonstration in Niamey over the 2018 finance law, living conditions and the presence of foreign troops on Nigerien soil. The protest resulted in clashes with security forces and the arrest of 26 civil society leaders.

11. In Nigeria, political developments centred on preparations for presidential and parliamentary elections set to take place in February 2019. On 9 April, the President,

Muhammadu Buhari, declared his intention to run for a second term. Former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar also announced his candidacy for the presidential election. A demand made by the House of Representatives in April, following an increase in violence in the Middle Belt and the north of the country, to dismiss national service chiefs and security advisers, has not been carried out. In addition, the decision of the National Assembly to summon Mr. Buhari to provide a briefing on the increased insecurity in the country prompted a debate on whether the legislature had such power over the executive. Meanwhile, the signing into law of a "not too young to run" bill, which will reduce the age limits set for candidates for elected positions, and the adoption of the Electoral Act amendment, which will regulate the general elections, are still pending.

12. In Senegal, preparations for the presidential election, to be held on 24 February 2019, continued against a backdrop of increasing mistrust between the Government and the opposition. On 19 April 2018, the Senegalese Parliament adopted a bill amending the electoral code that requires all presidential candidates to collect supporting signatures from 0.8 per cent of registered voters in at least 7 of the country's 14 regions. The opposition boycotted the vote on the bill on the grounds that it was designed to exclude potential presidential contenders. They also called for a neutral and independent electoral body to manage the election. On 30 March, the Mayor of Dakar and potential presidential contender in the 2019 election, Khalifa Sall, was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison for embezzlement of public funds.

13. On 7 March, Sierra Leone held its first presidential, legislative and local elections without the presence of a United Nations mission in the country. The process was marked by tensions and multiple legal challenges related to the eligibility of some presidential candidates and to an injunction postponing the second round of the presidential election, which eventually took place on 31 March. Electoral observer missions, including from the African Union, the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), reported that the polls were professionally organized, credible and largely peaceful. The candidate of the former opposition Sierra Leone People's Party, Julius Maada Bio, was elected President and was sworn in on 4 April, marking a peaceful transfer of power after 10 years of rule by the All People's Congress. The latter secured a majority in Parliament with 68 seats, while the Sierra Leone People's Party won 49 seats. The remaining 29 seats were filled by representatives of smaller political parties and independents. Parliament held its inaugural session on 25 April and elected as its Speaker Abass Bundu of the Sierra Leone People's Party. The vote was conducted in the absence of the Members of Parliament belonging to the All People's Congress, who walked out of the plenary to protest the imposition of injunctions against 15 of their Members of Parliament. Following coordinated interventions by ECOWAS and the United Nations, and the resumption of dialogue between the two main parties, all parliamentarians were sworn in on 4 May. The President was inaugurated on 12 May.

14. The inter-Togolese political dialogue started on 19 February under the facilitation of the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, with the support of the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé. Following a deadlock during its third session on 25 March, the dialogue was adjourned. At the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, held in Lomé on 14 April, Mr. Akufo-Addo and Mr. Condé were formally designated as ECOWAS facilitators for the dialogue. During the period under review, disagreements between national authorities and the opposition on the conduct of street demonstrations also contributed to increasing tensions.

B. Security trends

15. The security situation in West Africa was dominated by insecurity in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions. Asymmetrical terrorist attacks were carried out against national and international security forces, local authorities and civilians in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria. Violent extremist armed groups continued to harass civilians, carry out targeted abductions or killings of suspected informants or local representatives of States, burn down schools and threaten teaching staff. There was also an increase in clashes between farmers and herders, particularly in Ghana, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria.

16. In Nigeria, multiple clashes between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt states, as well as in the southern states of Edo, Ebonyi and Kogi, resulted in numerous casualties, population displacement and destruction of property. The ongoing detention of the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky, continued to trigger protests. While incidents of violence decreased in the Niger Delta and south-east regions, militant groups threatened to resume attacks.

17. Burkina Faso continued to face attacks along the Malian border from Islamist militant groups such as the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, while militants from Islamic State in the Greater Sahara continued to cross over into the country from the Niger. In Ouagadougou, on 2 March, twin attacks claimed by the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims against the military staff building and the French embassy killed at least 8 people and injured approximately 80 others. Ansar al-Islam also carried out repeated attacks against security forces and civilians in the northern province of Soum. Attacks have increasingly been reported in previously unaffected areas, raising concerns of spillover to other regions of the country.

18. In the Niger, the presence of non-State armed groups continued to grow in the western region of Tillabéri, where militants affiliated with Islamic State in the Greater Sahara conducted attacks against security services and other targets. Attacks against humanitarian workers have continued, as evidenced by the kidnapping of an international aid worker on the Malian border in April and repeated reports of theft of vehicles in the western and southern regions of the Niger. While there have been fewer reported attacks by Boko Haram's "Islamic State's West African Province" faction in the Diffa region, violent criminal activities have been on the rise.

19. There is growing concern that West African and Sahelian Islamist groups are reinforcing their regional linkages, given the surge in the complexity and lethality of attacks in recent months and the increasing use of improvised explosive devices in Burkina Faso and the Niger. On 7 April, the High Court of Dakar started the trial of 30 people from Senegal accused of preparing terrorist attacks and setting up local terrorist cells in southern Senegal, which would be capable of piloting attacks throughout the region. According to their testimonies, several members of the group had received training from Boko Haram in Nigeria.

20. Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea increased during the reporting period. In early April, the International Maritime Bureau reported 29 incidents in the first quarter of 2018 in the Gulf of Guinea (40 per cent of all attacks recorded worldwide), compared with 7 in the same area in the first quarter of 2017. Of the 29 recorded incidents, 22 were off the coast of Nigeria. Criminal groups increasingly resorted to hostage-taking: 113 of 114 kidnappings worldwide recorded in the first quarter of 2018 took place in the Gulf of Guinea. Drug smuggling and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, carried out partly by terrorist groups, continued to pose serious challenges in the subregion. Large seizures of methamphetamine trafficked by organized crime groups were recorded in various countries. Cattle rustling added

to insecurity in the north-western states of Nigeria, while armed banditry was a concern in the Agadez and Maradi regions of the Niger.

Boko Haram

21. During the reporting period, there was an overall decrease in attacks attributed to Boko Haram in the Niger, while Nigeria witnessed an increase in the scope and number of attacks. The group increased its attacks against civilian soft targets, including internally displaced persons and humanitarian workers. Female suicide bombers carried out a significant number of the attacks. According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), nearly one in every five suicide bombers in Nigeria is a child, and girls account for 75 per cent of all child suicide bombers.

22. The Nigerian armed forces, supported by the Multinational Joint Task Force, reportedly pushed Boko Haram out of several areas in north-eastern Nigeria. However, the group continued to launch deadly attacks and remained a significant threat. Since the beginning of 2018, Boko Haram is believed to have been responsible for more than 90 attacks, resulting in at least 260 casualties in Nigeria alone.

23. On 19 February, militants from Boko Haram's "Islamic State's West African Province" faction seized 112 schoolgirls and 1 boy from the town of Dapchi, Yobe State, Nigeria. The incident was followed by a string of attacks, including on 1 March in Rann, Borno State, where Boko Haram militants killed eight security personnel and three United Nations-contracted aid workers. That led to the temporary suspension of relief work in an area hosting some 55,000 internally displaced persons and the indefinite closure of all boarding schools in Borno State. On 21 March, the Nigerian Government announced that it had brokered a temporary ceasefire with the Boko Haram faction, leading to the release of 105 of the girls abducted from Dapchi. Negotiations with the group continued during the reporting period, with the President of Nigeria offering amnesty to all insurgents who agree to lay down their arms.

24. Meanwhile, the Niger and Nigeria, through the Multinational Joint Task Force, stepped up activities to reduce the operational capacities and the geographic reach of Boko Haram. During the months of April and May, the Task Force made significant gains against Boko Haram, and official reports announced that 59 militants had been killed and 5 leaders had been captured, and 1,000 hostages, mainly women and children, had been rescued in Borno State, Nigeria. During those operations, 22 soldiers of the Task Force lost their lives and 75 were injured. On 27 April, the Commander of the Task Force announced that the high rate of casualties was largely due to indirect fire and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

C. Socioeconomic trends

25. The overall macroeconomic outlook for West Africa remained positive. According to a report released by the African Development Bank on 12 March, economies in West Africa have rebounded from the slump in commodity prices. The Bank noted that overall economic growth in the subregion should reach 3.6 per cent in 2018 and 3.8 per cent in 2019 due to an increase in oil and agricultural production and the rising prices of some natural resources. Benin, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and Togo are projected to grow at a rate of 5 per cent or more. As a result, the region-wide ratio between debt and gross domestic product is expected to improve. In its report, the African Development Bank also noted that income inequality remained high across the region. In an effort to maximize the benefits of financial regional cooperation, all West African countries, with the exception of Nigeria, became

signatories to the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement at a signing ceremony in Kigali on 21 March.

26. In the Sahel subregion, unemployment, inequality and a lack of opportunities continue to threaten stability. In its study on the socioeconomic prospects for the Sahel, the Economic Commission for Africa points to the need to address the root causes of the crisis to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and unlock opportunities for investment. The United Nations support plan for the Sahel seeks to assist countries in the region to spur growth through economic investment, develop human capital and resilience, improve the provision of basic services and consolidate peacebuilding and governance efforts.

D. Humanitarian trends

27. The humanitarian situation in parts of West Africa and the Sahel remained critical, mainly due to food insecurity, forced displacements and chronic vulnerability to external shocks. Around 20 per cent of people requiring relief assistance worldwide reside in West Africa and Sahel. The immediate outlook remains challenging owing to sustained climate variabilities and persistent insecurity.

28. In the Lake Chad basin area, which has been affected by extreme climatic conditions, 4 million people are currently classified as facing food insecurity, down from 7 million during the same period in 2017. Some 4.7 million people are projected to face severe food insecurity in the approaching lean season in the area, mainly due to ongoing conflict and security issues. The continued shrinking of Lake Chad has decreased the resilience and adaptive ability of populations to cope with humanitarian shocks and exacerbated competition over scant resources. In addition, shortages of land, pasture and water have led to the forced migration of pastoralist communities in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, putting 2.5 million people at risk of a livelihood crisis in 2018 in the affected areas. Across the Sahel, some 6.9 million people, 3.7 million of them in north-eastern Nigeria alone, are in food crisis. Without assistance, the figure could rise to 10.2 million between June and August, while the number of malnourished children in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal is likely to increase from 1.1 million to 1.6 million.

29. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, during the reporting period the number of displaced persons across the Lake Chad basin region was 2.3 million, including 1.7 million internally displaced persons in north-east Nigeria, where food insecurity and malnutrition remained high. Despite a decline in some areas, insecurity and instability continued to drive displacement across many areas in the subregion. The conflict in Mali increasingly affected border regions in Burkina Faso and the Niger, displacing thousands of families. Intercommunity clashes in the Ménaka region of Mali have led 3,000 people to flee from Mali to Burkina Faso since February, adding to the 24,000 Malian refugees in that country since 2012. The total number of Malian refugees in neighbouring countries was estimated at 137,700 as at 30 April 2018. In the Niger, more than 11,500 people have been uprooted by violence in the western Tillabéri region since December 2017.

30. While humanitarian assistance has enabled the maintenance of livelihoods for hundreds of thousands of people in Mali, aid workers have been hit by a spate of attacks and robberies, forcing some agencies to suspend operations. From January through April 2018, approximately 76 such security incidents were recorded in northern and central Mali, compared with 42 incidents for the same period in 2017. In Nigeria, an attack in Rann, Borno State, on 3 March resulted in three aid workers killed and three others abducted.

31. North-east Nigeria grappled with two cholera outbreaks in Borno State in February and Yobe State in March, even though case numbers have dropped in comparison with the previous period. Nigeria was also affected by an outbreak of Lassa fever, with nearly 2,000 suspected cases across 21 states.

32. Humanitarian organizations have requested $1.6 billion for 2018 to ease hunger and provide water, health care and education, and to help communities rebuild their livelihoods in the Lake Chad basin area. Humanitarian appeals have also been issued for Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. However, humanitarian response across the region remains critically underfunded.

E. Trends on human rights

33. The period under review saw a number of judicial proceedings involving prominent political actors, a series of demonstrations conducted in a number of countries and incremental progress made in promoting transitional justice. In some countries, judicial proceedings were perceived as targeting political opponents and triggered concerns about a possible politicization of the justice system. Allegations of infringements on the freedoms of assembly and expression were brought by opposition, civil society, trade union and other groups in a number of countries, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal and Togo.

34. In the Gambia, Baba Galleh Jallow was appointed as Executive Director of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission on 5 March. In Mauritania, in March and April, the Special Tribunal in Nouadhibou sentenced three people to prison terms ranging from 10 to 20 years for acts of slavery. The Special Tribunal in Nouakchott sentenced three people to one year in prison for acts of slavery. One case was appealed and is still pending. In Guinea, a steering committee comprising national and international stakeholders was set up by the Minister for Justice in April to facilitate the organization of the trial of alleged perpetrators of the 28 September 2009 stadium massacre in Conakry.

35. In relation to accountability for terrorism-related crimes, a Nigerian court sentenced more than 200 people, including kidnappers of the girls from Chibok in 2014, to prison terms of up to 30 years, and released 475 others due to lack of evidence. In N'Djamena, from 10 to 13 April, the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the United Nations organized a workshop that developed a regional strategy for the screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram in Lake Chad basin countries. The workshop was a follow-up to the Regional Stabilization Conference for the Lake Chad Region held in N'Djamena from 2 to 4 November 2017, during which all stakeholders agreed to draft a regional stabilization strategy for the Lake Chad region.

F. Trends on gender issues

36. The representation of women in senior government positions remained low. In the new Cabinet of Liberia, only 2 of the 19 ministers are women. Similarly, the Government formed on 25 April in Guinea-Bissau counts only 4 women among its 26 members. Following legislative elections in Sierra Leone on 7 March, the number of female members in the new Parliament remained at 12.8 per cent, which is half of the sub-Saharan African and worldwide average. In the local elections held in Guinea on 4 February, 20 per cent of the candidates were women.

37. Meanwhile, countries of the subregion maintained efforts to promote women's participation in peacebuilding processes. On 22 March, Togo validated its revised national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions for the period 2018–2022. In addition, on 26 and 27 February, Ghana held a consultation workshop to review its national action plan on Council resolution 1325 (2000).

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

A. Good offices and special assignments by my Special Representative

38. My Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel continued to support efforts to sustain peace in the region, in collaboration with regional and international partners, by promoting and supporting inclusive national political dialogues, constitutional and democratic reforms and transparent, credible and peaceful elections.

39. My Special Representative and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean-Claude Brou, met on 20 March and reaffirmed their commitment to maximizing synergies between ECOWAS and UNOWAS, particularly in relation to upcoming elections in a number of countries, the issue of transhumance and the crises in Guinea-Bissau and Togo. He also pursued consultations with the Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé of Togo, on 20 April, with a focus on democratic and constitutional processes and deepening regional cooperation. In addition to consultations with other leaders, my Special Representative paid a visit on 7 April to the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, in the latter's capacity as ECOWAS mediator on Guinea-Bissau.

40. My Special Representative contributed to building consensus in support of a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Togo. In that effort, he assisted in facilitating the deployment of a team of United Nations experts to provide advisory support to the facilitation and mediation efforts of the President of Ghana. He also held regular consultations with the Presidents of Ghana, Guinea and Togo, as well as with other international and local stakeholders, with a view to expediting the dialogue process.

41. As part of my initiative to sustain peace, my Special Representative paid particular attention to the transition process in the Gambia. From 15 to 18 February, he undertook a mission to Banjul, encouraging consensus over the tenure of the President, Adama Barrow, in line with the Constitution. He assured interlocutors of the commitment of the United Nations to consolidate peace in the country. On 18 February, he attended the country's national day celebrations. In addition, from 18 to 27 April UNOWAS participated in a mission led by the Peacebuilding Support Office to advance the implementation of the initiative to sustain peace. On 20 February, my Special Representative participated in a meeting in Dakar with international partners to promote the national development plan of the Gambia. He also participated in the donor round table conference on the Gambia held in Brussels on 22 May, during which approximately €1.45 billion was pledged by donors in support of the development plan.

42. Following the terrorist attack on 2 March, my Special Representative visited Ouagadougou on 3 and 4 March to meet with the President of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, and with representatives of the Government and civil society. During his meetings, he conveyed my deepest sympathies and the strong solidarity of the United Nations, as well as our firm condemnation of the terrorist act. He also emphasized the importance of bringing the perpetrators to justice, as well as carrying

on with critical ongoing justice processes. In the course of the mission, he met with the Chair of the ECOWAS Authority to exchange views on the political and security situation in the country.

43. The engagement of my Special Representative contributed to ensuring a peaceful conclusion to the presidential election in Sierra Leone, where he was present during both rounds. In close collaboration with the former Presidents of Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and South Africa, who were leading observer missions of the Commonwealth, ECOWAS, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa and the African Union, respectively, he mediated disputes which threatened to escalate and possibly derail the process. The joint negotiations resulted in an agreement to resume the tabulation of results, which had been suspended during the second round of the presidential election. He conducted another mission to Sierra Leone with the President of the ECOWAS Commission from 27 to 30 April. Their coordinated intervention contributed to lowering tensions following the election of the Speaker of Parliament and facilitated the subsequent swearing-in of the All People's Congress Members of Parliament. He returned to Freetown on 12 May to attend the inauguration of the President of Sierra Leone.

44. My Special Representative also attended the inauguration of the President of Liberia on 22 January. He returned to Monrovia on 21 and 22 March, with the Deputy Secretary-General, to witness the closing ceremony of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). During the visit, they engaged in discussions with national and international stakeholders on the transition process and on the continuation of United Nations support to Liberia, including through the United Nations country team and a reinforced Resident Coordinator's office.

45. Cognizant of the politically active environment ahead of the Nigerian polls in 2019, he conducted consultations with political and religious leaders in Abuja from 18 to 21 March. National stakeholders concurred on the need for the full reactivation of the National Peace Committee of Nigeria, which had been instrumental in facilitating dialogue prior to the country's elections in 2015.

46. Following the local elections in Guinea, my Special Representative undertook two missions to Conakry. During his visit of 7 and 8 February, accompanied by the ECOWAS Ambassador to Guinea, he held consultations with the Independent National Electoral Commission and representatives of the Government and opposition, the diplomatic community and others, urging for calm and recourse to legal means to settle electoral-related disputes. On 7 March, he met with the President to, inter alia, underscore the need to accelerate implementation of the political agreement of 12 October 2016.

47. My Special Representative conducted a good offices mission to the Niger from 23 to 25 April. In his consultations with national stakeholders, he emphasized the need to lay the basis for an inclusive and constructive dialogue. From 21 to 27 May, he dispatched a fact-finding mission to Nouakchott to evaluate the peace and stability situation in the country ahead of the upcoming legislative, municipal and regional elections.

48. In continuation of his regular efforts at supporting coherence and cooperation among United Nations actors, on 5 March my Special Representative chaired the 32nd high-level meeting of the heads of United Nations missions in West Africa and the Sahel, which was held in Bamako. The meeting was attended by my Special Representatives for Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Central Africa, as well as by the Resident Coordinator for Côte d'Ivoire. On 12 and 13 April, my Special Representative shared regional experiences on conflict prevention at a retreat organized in New York by the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research.

More generally, he continued his regular consultations with members of the diplomatic community and his participation in regional workshops and conferences.

B. Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

49. Insecurity in areas affected by Boko Haram continued to hinder the activities of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in the northernmost regions of the land boundary between the two countries. Social and political unrest in the English-speaking north-western and south-western regions of Cameroon raised additional security concerns. As a result, the demarcation of the border and the subsequent emplacement of pillars continued to be a challenge. Against that background, the parties to the Mixed Commission met in Lagos, Nigeria, on 19 and 20 March to finalize the implementation of reinforced security measures for field operations.

50. On 18 March in Abuja, and on 15 May in Yaoundé, my Special Representative, who also serves as Chair of the Mixed Commission, engaged in bilateral consultations with the heads of the Nigerian and Cameroonian delegations to work on outstanding areas of disagreement. Overall, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the judgment of the International Court of Justice of October 2002 and to fully demarcating the land and maritime boundaries shared by the two countries.

51. My Special Representative also successfully concluded fundraising efforts to replenish a trust fund for pillar construction along the land boundary. Consequently, pillar emplacement is expected to resume in October 2018, at the end of the rainy season.

C. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

Security sector reform

52. UNOWAS continued supporting countries of the subregion in their efforts to conduct security sector reform. In Burkina Faso, the security sector reform process was scaled up during the reporting period. The Senior Security Sector Reform Adviser deployed by the United Nations supported the completion of a needs assessment in March and the compilation and prioritization of recommendations emanating from the national forum on security held in October 2017. The Government reached consensus with regard to the establishment of institutional mechanisms for the reform process.

53. In the Gambia, security sector reform was affected by challenges related to strategic direction and national coordination. A security sector assessment was undertaken by the national working group on security sector reform, with the support of the United Nations, and was endorsed by the Government in February. Subsequently, the first meeting of the security sector reform steering committee took place on 18 April. The meeting was chaired by the Vice-President of the Gambia and established next steps in the reform process. The United Nations continued to provide advice and technical support to the authorities, while liaising with partners to improve coordination.

54. In Guinea, the United Nations advisory team continued to assist the Government in strengthening oversight mechanisms and creating units responsible for dealing with gender issues within the defence and security forces. The Conseil supérieur de défense nationale became increasingly operational, thus allowing for the team's eventual departure.

Conflicts between herders and farmers

55. During the reporting period, UNOWAS supported the ECOWAS Commission in the development of a regional action plan on transhumance. The Office also established an informal working group on pastoralism and conflict prevention with the participation of the United Nations and regional entities working on the issue.

56. In Libreville, on 10 and 11 April, UNOWAS and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) organized a meeting to share knowledge and experience on conflict analysis and pastoralism. During the meeting, UNOWAS shared the findings of its study on pastoralism and security in West Africa and the Sahel. In addition, UNOCA and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) agreed to conduct joint analyses in 2018.

57. In Abuja, from 24 to 26 April, UNOWAS participated in a ministerial and experts meeting on conflicts between herders and farmers in West Africa, organized by the ECOWAS Commission and the Government of Nigeria. Relevant recommendations included the need for States to report on the implementation of the ECOWAS transhumance protocol.

Boko Haram

58. My Special Representative continued to support diplomatic, security and humanitarian responses to Boko Haram. He also focused efforts on facilitating an agreement for the holding of a joint summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 2349 (2017). In that context, my Special Representatives for West Africa and the Sahel and for Central Africa participated in the meeting of ECOWAS-ECCAS Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 20 April in Lomé, which resulted in an agreement to convene an interregional summit in July 2018, to coincide with the ECOWAS Summit of Heads of State and Government. The Chairs of ECOWAS and ECCAS (the President of Togo and the President of Gabon, respectively), welcomed an offer of United Nations support to the forum.

59. On 28 February, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel took part in the International Conference on Lake Chad hosted by the Government of Nigeria with the support of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Heads of State and Government of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, the Niger and Nigeria adopted a declaration reaffirming their commitment to increase cooperation to safeguard Lake Chad and address the socioeconomic impact of climate change and instability. In his capacity as my High-level Representative for Nigeria, my Special Representative also held discussions with security institutions and other key stakeholders on the situation in the Lake Chad basin with a view to enhancing regional cooperation, reintegrating ex-combatants and dealing with root causes.

60. Through the facilitation of my Special Representatives for West Africa and the Sahel and for Central Africa, the governors of territories bordering Lake Chad met for the first time in Maiduguri, Nigeria on 8 and 9 May, and established the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum to enhance joint efforts towards building peace and fostering sustainable development across the Lake Chad basin.

Strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union

61. On 1 March, UNOWAS, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union met in Freetown to discuss cooperation and plan out joint activities. On 11 April, the Secretary-General of the Mano River Union met with my Deputy Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel in Dakar to discuss building the capacity of the Mano River Union's joint border security and confidence-building units, strengthening its women and

peace network and enhancing female political leadership and political participation, in the context of the cooperation framework between UNOWAS and the Mano River Union.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

62. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in West Africa and the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre continued to strengthen their operational capacities. My Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel continued to work with States to maintain their commitment to support the running costs of the centres. He also encouraged partners to better coordinate their maritime-security-related activities with ECOWAS and the Interregional Coordination Centre for maritime safety in the Gulf of Guinea within the framework of the Yaoundé maritime security architecture.

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

63. My Special Representative remained in close contact with relevant regional partners, particularly with regard to the framework of the implementation of the ECOWAS action plan on illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse for the period 2016–2020.

64. From 7 to 9 January, ECOWAS, with the support of the United Nations, conducted a workshop to build the capacity of civil society organizations to prevent drug abuse. From 12 to 14 March, a subregional workshop held by UNODC brought together representatives from national administrations and judicial training schools for a training session on offences related to trafficking in persons. In addition, a transregional forum, organized in Algiers from 23 to 25 January by UNODC, set the framework for enhanced cooperation between countries in the Maghreb region and the Sahel in the fight against illicit trafficking and transnational organized crime.

D. Implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

65. During the period under review, UNOWAS continued to advance the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel by providing support for the development of the United Nations support plan and bringing together United Nations entities and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and ECOWAS. As part of these efforts, on 21 March, I appointed Ibrahim Thiaw (Mauritania) as my Special Adviser for the Sahel to work closely with my Special Representative and the regional United Nations Development Group in implementing the strategy.

66. With a view to enhancing coherence, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel participated in an informal meeting of special envoys and partners for the Sahel, hosted by Sweden on 24 and 25 January. Moreover, on 28 and 29 March, the Deputy Secretary-General, my Special Representative and my Special Adviser participated in a strategic consultative meeting on the Sahel in Nouakchott, organized by the African Union Commission, which explored ways to strengthen coherence among various Sahel initiatives. The Deputy Secretary-General called on regional actors to establish a working group for that purpose.

67. UNOWAS continued efforts to strengthen cooperation among national, regional and international actors on the Sahel. On 2 March, the Office co-chaired a regional United Nations Development Group meeting to discuss the implications of the conference on the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel in Brussels on 22 and 23 February,

while harmonizing positions ahead of upcoming engagements with the G-5 Sahel. In N'Djamena, on 15 March, my Special Representative co-chaired the sixth meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel to advocate for ownership of the United Nations support plan by Sahel countries and regional actors. On 4 May, my Special Representative also chaired a meeting of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel steering committee in Dakar, which brought together the United Nations system at the regional and national levels to exchange views on emerging peace, humanitarian, development and security trends in the region. The committee welcomed the appointment of my Special Adviser for the Sahel. The United Nations support plan is in its final stages and will be presented to Member States soon.

68. UNOWAS continued to support the G-5 Sahel as a key regional partner through capacity-building activities and the facilitation of exchanges with United Nations entities in the Sahel. Two meetings took place between United Nations entities and the G-5 Sahel secretariat, in Nouakchott on 29 January and in N'Djamena on 13 March, respectively, to refine the framework for programmatic cooperation between the United Nations and the G-5 Sahel and to ensure synergies between the priority investment plan and the United Nations support plan. In Ouagadougou, on 26 and 27 April, UNOWAS and the G-5 Sahel secretariat organized, with the support of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the second meeting of the ministers responsible for religious affairs of the G-5 Sahel countries, which took stock of the achievements of the Group's regional cell for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism and the national antenna offices set up with the support of UNOWAS.

E. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

69. Throughout the reporting period, UNOWAS collaborated closely with human rights actors in the context of recent and upcoming elections. In Abidjan, on 26 and 27 March, UNOWAS organized a colloquium on challenges to and prospects for political reforms in West Africa, which was attended by approximately 70 representatives of institutions that are spearheading political reforms. The colloquium resulted in the creation of a platform for political reforms in West Africa and the Sahel. The secretariat of the platform will be hosted by UNOWAS. ECOWAS and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance have pledged financial support for the platform.

70. In a bid to enhance the overall role of national human rights institutions, UNOWAS, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, ECOWAS and the West African members of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions, organized a regional forum in Dakar from 12 to 14 April on electoral and political reform processes. Also in Dakar, on 22 March, UNOWAS convened a forum on adjudicating civil and political rights. In addition, on 17 April, my Special Representative met with the President of the Open Society Foundations to consider strengthening joint analyses and pursuing opportunities for advocacy during periods of increased tensions in countries of the subregion.

71. UNOWAS continued to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, youth and peace and security. On 10 and 11 April, UNOWAS and ECOWAS, with the support of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, co-hosted a high-level event on women, violence and terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel. The meeting adopted the Dakar Call for Action, which called on the States and Governments of West Africa and the Sahel to systematically involve women in all initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism.

72. UNOWAS continued to work closely with the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel. The Office convened two subregional exchange sessions on women in security sector governance and conflict prevention on 12 March and on youth as victims of political manipulation on 3 May. National chapters of the Working Group discussed ways to foster dialogue between citizens and security services and enhance the capacity of women with regard to security sector reform processes. From 26 to 31 March, UNOWAS facilitated a Working Group mission to Côte d'Ivoire, during which the Working Group advocated for the adoption of a new national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). On 29 January, UNOWAS participated in the launch of the Spotlight Initiative, which is a joint effort by the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate violence against women and girls.

IV. Observations and recommendations

73. While there were several positive developments in West Africa and the Sahel during the reporting period, many sources of instability remain, including deficits in governance and transversal threats, such as conflicts between herders and farmers. The prevalence of armed attacks by militant and extremist groups, and their negative consequences for development opportunities in the subregion, are a stark reminder of the inadequacy of current responses to address those challenges.

74. I commend the authorities in Burkina Faso and the Gambia for the progress made in reforming their security sectors. I encourage them to accelerate and consolidate those efforts and to enhance coherence and coordination among all partners. I also encourage the Gambian authorities to step up efforts to operationalize the commissions on human rights and on truth, reconciliation and reparations, and urge stakeholders to support those processes.

75. I welcome the peaceful democratic transition in Liberia and call on international partners to continue supporting the people and the Government of Liberia in consolidating peace, building resilience and achieving sustainable development while putting in place essential reforms. The closure of UNMIL continues the positive trend towards ending peace missions in the subregion. It also highlights the need for continuing United Nations support in order to consolidate the gains obtained over the past years and to sustain peace. United Nations transitions exemplify the need to identify more sustainable funding mechanisms for political capacities in United Nations non-mission settings and enhance support capacities at the level of regional offices.

76. I commend the people of Sierra Leone on the conduct of peaceful and credible elections and urge the Government to continue its collaboration with national stakeholders to boost national cohesion. I also commend the measures taken by the Government to bolster transparent and accountable governance as a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development.

77. I welcome the continuing regional efforts aimed at assisting national stakeholders in Togo in overcoming their differences peacefully through dialogue and in line with the democratic aspirations of the Togolese people.

78. I note that, while technical processes related to voting on election days have improved across West Africa and the Sahel and have become less controversial, pre- and post-electoral phases remain challenging. I welcome the very close collaboration among the United Nations, regional partners and national institutions during recent elections in the subregion and reiterate the need to remain focused on overcoming those challenges in future electoral contests. I also call on authorities and

national stakeholders to work together to ensure a level playing field and help create an environment that is conducive to the preparation and holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal.

79. While the spate of demonstrations in several countries highlights advances in freedoms of expression and assembly, they also indicate prevailing fundamental grievances. I wish to emphasize the critical need for and responsibility of Governments to provide effective and accountable governance in addressing the root causes of conflict, including by ensuring socioeconomic and political inclusion, in West Africa and the Sahel.

80. I note with concern the persistently low number of women in senior government positions in West Africa and the Sahel and urge countries in the subregion to take specific measures, in accordance with national and regional commitments, to enhance political opportunities for women and promote inclusive development. I also note with concern the role of women as both victims and perpetrators of extremist militancy. It is critical that we redouble our efforts to ensure women's full participation in the design and implementation of comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of that trend.

81. I am deeply concerned that in some parts of the Sahel the reach and control of Governments appear to be contracting rather than expanding, allowing space for extremist groups, often linked to transnational organized crime, to provide alternative livelihoods and protection for communities. I am particularly concerned about the closure of schools in affected areas in Burkina Faso and Mali, which is depriving the younger generations of their right to education.

82. Governance and development efforts must continue to be accompanied by a robust security response. I commend the efforts of the countries participating in the Multinational Joint Task Force and encourage strengthened partnership among the affected countries and with regional organizations, including the African Union. I am also pleased to note the continued efforts by members of the G-5 Sahel to enhance the operability of its Joint Force.

83. I underscore the need for all counter-insurgency efforts to be carried out in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and to ensure that operations are aligned with and contribute to broader regional initiatives and do not harm the very populations they are intended to serve. I congratulate the Government of Nigeria for conducting trials of Boko Haram suspects and urge the acceleration of the reintegration of victims and other categories of individuals associated with extremist groups in all affected countries.

84. I encourage national authorities to provide critical humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities. In addition, I reiterate my call on the international community to increase political, humanitarian, logistical and financial assistance to the affected countries, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force, and to advance the disbursement of pledged funds.

85. Driven by competition for land and water, rapid population growth, weak governance, ecological pressures and the circulation of small arms and light weapons, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are becoming multidimensional threats that affect the entire subregion. I call on ECOWAS and its member States, with the support of the United Nations system and in consultation with affected communities, to find sustainable solutions to that challenge, implement national and regional protocols on transhumance and free movement, sensitize populations and States to those normative frameworks and identify long-term strategies, based on risk assessments, for curbing the impact of climate change in the subregion.

86. I welcome the conclusions of the International Conference on Lake Chad and call for the urgent implementation of measures to address the drastic shrinking of Lake Chad and revitalize the ecosystem of the Lake Chad basin, which is the epicentre of socioeconomic activity for more than 45 million people in the region.

87. I am pleased with the collective efforts being made by the United Nations system, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, towards recalibrating the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel in order to expedite its impact, including through the development of the United Nations support plan, the mobilization of additional resources and the provision of support to the countries in the subregion.

88. I welcome the commitment expressed by the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to completing the demarcation of the land and maritime boundaries shared by the two countries. I encourage the parties to renew their efforts to resolve any residual differences of interpretation of selected provisions in the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002, with a view to accelerating the completion of the mandate of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission.

89. I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of West Africa and the Sahel region, the African Union, ECOWAS, the G-5 Sahel, the Mano River Union, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission for their continued cooperation with UNOWAS. I also extend my appreciation to the United Nations system in West Africa and the Sahel, civil society organizations and other institutions for their close partnership with UNOWAS. I commend and further encourage the close collaboration between UNOCA and UNOWAS on an increasing range of topical and transversal challenges that reflects and responds proactively to the enhanced cooperation between ECCAS and ECOWAS. I would like to express particular appreciation to my Special Representative and my Special Adviser, as well as the staff of UNOWAS and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, for their continuing efforts to advance peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel.

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Security Council

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Letter dated 28 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith an assessment of the work of the Security Council for the month of December 2017 during the presidency of Japan (see annex). The document was prepared under my own responsibility, following consultations with other members of the Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Koro **Bessho**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 28 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Japan (December 2017)

Introduction

During the month of December 2017, under the presidency of Japan, the Security Council held 30 public meetings, 2 closed meetings and 11 consultations of the whole. The Council adopted nine resolutions and four presidential statements and issued eight press statements.

Africa

Central African region

On 13 December, the Security Council held a briefing followed by closed consultations of the whole on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). In the open Chamber, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA, François Louncény Fall, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of UNOCA (S/2017/995). He highlighted the support of the United Nations for various initiatives in the region, including the Central African Economic and Monetary Community zone, and enhancing collaboration between UNOCA and the Economic Community of Central African States. He summarized the difficulties facing various countries in the region and urged inclusive dialogue, adherence to rule of law and economic development, as well as more international support for efforts to address the threat of Boko Haram. He also encouraged support for the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army in the light of the increased security vacuum following the withdrawal of forces of Uganda and the United States of America from the zone.

At the consultations, the Security Council expressed its appreciation for the engagement of UNOCA and reaffirmed its support for the efforts of the Special Representative, through his good offices, to prevent conflict and consolidate peace and stability in the region. The Council expressed concerns about the situation in some countries in the region, the continuing transitional threat of the Lord's Resistance Army and the terrorist activities perpetrated by Boko Haram. It looked forward to the Special Representative's efforts in the following reporting period through his good offices and preventive diplomacy, including efforts to address the fragile situation in the Central African Republic and the terrorist activities perpetrated by Boko Haram, as well as the situations of individual countries.

Central African Republic

On 4 December, the Security Council issued a press statement on the Central African Republic, condemning in the strongest terms the attack on a detachment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic in Bria. The members of the Council also expressed their deepest condolences and sympathy to the family of a Mauritanian peacekeeper who had been killed and wished a speedy recovery to two Mauritanian peacekeepers and one Zambian peacekeeper who had been injured.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

A brutal attack against the company operating base of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at Semuliki, North Kivu, on 7 December led the Security Council to issue a press statement following its closed consultations of the whole on 8 December. In its condemnation, the Council reiterated that such attacks might constitute war crimes under international law and called upon the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the perpetrators were swiftly brought to justice. The Council expressed its deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers and 5 members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo who had died and a speedy recovery to the those who had been injured (at least 53). The Council also held a moment of silence for the peacekeepers ahead of its meeting on a different item on 8 December.

Great Lakes region

On 8 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2389 (2017). In the resolution, the Council took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, reaffirming that it remained an essential mechanism to achieving durable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. The Council called upon all signatory States, especially the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to redouble their efforts in order to fully and promptly implement their commitments in good faith, including the commitment not to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries. It stressed the need to deepen cooperation among the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community, and the core signatory countries of the Framework. The Secretary-General was invited to assess the progress, challenges and shortcomings in the implementation of the Framework and to present his vision, supported by concrete recommendations, to the Council in his next report.

Liberia

The Security Council held consultations of the whole on the situation in Liberia on 13 December. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Liberia and Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Farid Zarif, gave a briefing to the Council members on the recent developments in the elections in Liberia and the outlook for the second round of the presidential election. He also briefed the Council on the drawdown of UNMIL towards its final withdrawal. Council members commended the peaceful conduct of the elections in October and the use of established legal mechanisms to address subsequent complaints. Council members emphasized the importance of the timely completion of the electoral process and a peaceful transition of power within the constitutional timelines, and called upon the Liberian authorities to ensure a credible and peaceful second round of the presidential election, including through the full participation of women. Members expressed their support and appreciation for the important role played by the Special Representative and UNMIL towards a peaceful transition and their hope for the orderly drawdown of the Mission. Recognizing the need to further consolidate current peacebuilding efforts in Liberia, members stressed the importance of the continued support of international partners to that end.

Libya

On 14 December, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/26) to emphasize the continuity of the Libyan Political Agreement of 17 December 2015 throughout the country's transitional period, reiterating that the Agreement remained the only viable framework to end the Libyan political crisis. The Council also reaffirmed its endorsement of the United Nations action plan for an inclusive Libyan-owned political process and looked forward to its further implementation, including preparation for elections. The Council underscored that Libyans should decide their own future without foreign interference.

Peace and security in Africa

On 8 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2391 (2017), by which it requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate steps to conclude a technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and States of the Group of Five for the Sahel, with a view to providing specified operational and logistical support through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. The representatives of China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, the United States and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland made statements after the vote.

Under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the representatives of Mali and Mauritania were invited to participate in the meeting.

Somalia

On 6 December, the Security Council issued a press statement welcoming the successful conclusion of the Somalia Security Conference and the inaugural Somalia Partnership Forum, held in Mogadishu on 4 and 5 December, as well as the continued commitments by all parties to build upon the progress in Somalia since 2012. Members underlined the need to implement the national strategy and action plan of Somalia for preventing and countering violent extremism and to further develop the political settlement. They also urged continued international humanitarian response.

South Sudan

A meeting with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was held on 6 December. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Bintou Keita, conducted a briefing.

The Security Council held a briefing and consultations of the whole on 7 December. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, briefed the Council on key developments and challenges in 2017, as well as the efforts of UNMISS to be more robust, nimble and proactive ahead of the imminent dry season. He drew the Council's attention to the uptick in conflict in 2017 in the greater Upper Nile, the Equatorias and Western Bahr el-Ghazal, with a huge impact on the humanitarian situation. In the light thereof, the Under-Secretary-General welcomed the increased regional efforts, in particular the work towards the high-level revitalization forum led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, gave a briefing on the deteriorating humanitarian situation. He reported that more than 2 million people had fled South Sudan, almost two thirds of the remaining population in the country still needed humanitarian assistance, about 1.9 million people were internally displaced and 210,000 people were in the protection of civilian sites at UNMISS bases. Stressing the continued need

for United Nations humanitarian assistance, the Under-Secretary-General called for the Republican Order issued by the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, for the free, unimpeded and unhindered movement of humanitarian assistance convoys to be fully implemented at all levels and by all parties.

The Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for South Sudan, Ismail Wais, detailed the past few months of preparations for the high-level revitalization forum of the parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. He emphasized that consultations had taken place with all parties, resulting in 48 submissions on how to proceed. The Special Envoy listed factors that he believed would influence the forum's success, such as inclusivity, the cessation of hostilities and a permanent ceasefire, political will, the unified position of the opposition, gender parity and the participation of women, the participation of Riek Machar, the coordination of concurrent political initiatives and wider consultations and transparency.

The representative of South Sudan stressed the commitment of the Transitional Government of National Unity to the forum. He also welcomed the holding of the consultations with the team for the review of the mandate of UNMISS.

On 14 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2392 (2017) to extend the mandate of UNMISS until 15 March 2018. On the same day, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/25) in which, while stressing its continuing deep concern at the situation in South Sudan, it emphasized its strong support for the high-level revitalization forum of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and urged all parties to engage constructively in the process. The Council also called upon all parties to end hostilities and agree to monitored. effective and durable security arrangements to stop the conflict, and to take specific steps to improve the human rights and humanitarian situation, including by ensuring safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors.

Sudan

On 7 December, the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan, gave a briefing to the Security Council on the work of the Committee, including the holding of the first joint informal consultations by the Committee with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

On 12 December, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, briefed the Security Council on the situation in Darfur, pursuant to resolution 1593 (2005). The Prosecutor expressed concern that arrest warrants were not being executed, even by States parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and regret with regard to the repeated inaction on the part of the Council. She called upon the Council to prioritize action on the outstanding warrants of arrest. She noted the refusal by the Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and invited the Sudan to rethink that position.

Some Security Council members expressed their support for the work of the International Criminal Court and called upon the Government of the Sudan to meet its obligations under resolution 1593 (2005) to cooperate fully with the Court and execute outstanding arrest warrants. Some members also asserted that the Council should take measures in that regard. Others expressed the view that resolution 1593 (2005) did not change norms of international law on immunity for senior officials of States that were not parties to the Rome Statute and reiterated the call by the African Union for the suspension of proceedings against the President of the Sudan, Omer

Al-Bashir. The representative of the Sudan also took the floor under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

Asia

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 11 December, the Security Council held a meeting on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The agenda of the meeting was adopted after a procedural vote, with 10 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 2 abstentions.

At that meeting, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenča, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, briefed the Security Council on the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during 2017, noting the lack of progress, and expressed their concerns and observations.

In statements before and after the procedural vote, some Security Council members objected to the meeting on the grounds that human rights did not fall under the mandate of the Council. They stated that the primary responsibility of the Council was the maintenance of international peace and security and therefore the Council was not the appropriate forum for debating human rights issues and should not allow human rights issues to be politicized. Some members of the Council stressed that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had been diverting its resources into pursuing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles over the welfare of its people and the human rights situation in the country was therefore closely linked with international peace and security, which was within the Council's mandate. Some delegations also voiced concern about the treatment of prisoners and detainees in the country and the welfare of the abducted Japanese citizens. In accordance with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, the delegation of the Republic of Korea made a statement.

Myanmar

On 12 December, the Security Council held a briefing at which the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, gave briefings. The Under-Secretary-General said that, although the violence had subsided, new refugees continued to arrive in Bangladesh and that the estimated number of refugees who had entered Bangladesh since 25 August exceeded 626,000. Welcoming the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Myanmar and Bangladesh, he urged all Myanmar leaders to adopt measures to defuse tensions and create an environment for the safe and dignified repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, including through interfaith initiatives. The Special Representative described her experiences during her visit to Rohingya refugees in camps in Bangladesh, where women and girls had reported that they had endured or witnessed sexual violence. She said that it was crucial that the safe return of the Rohingya people be accompanied by guarantees of basic security and rights. She urged the Security Council to demand a swift end to the violence, ensure that perpetrators were held accountable, create conditions for a safe and dignified future for survivors and ensure unhindered humanitarian access.

All members, as well as the representatives of Bangladesh and Myanmar under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, made statements in the Chamber. Council members welcomed the memorandum of understanding between Myanmar and Bangladesh and the commitment of Myanmar to implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Some speakers,

however, expressed concern at the continued violence and human rights violations and called for the perpetrators of crimes, including crimes of sexual violence, to be held accountable, as well as for unhindered access for humanitarian organizations.

At the closed consultations of the whole on the same day, in response to questions from some members, the Under-Secretary-General and representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs explained the recent progress and challenges of accountability for human rights violations, the return of displaced persons and humanitarian conditions in Rakhine State and related areas.

Middle East and Asia

Afghanistan

The Security Council held a debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on 21 December. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA, Tadamichi Yamamoto, gave a briefing. He highlighted the elections to be held in Afghanistan in 2018 and 2019, calling them critical for the future of the country.

Following the Special Representative's briefing, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Yuri Fedotov, informed the Council that there was evidence of links between organized crime and terrorist groups exploiting drug manufacturing and trafficking. He urged the Council to pay more attention to that issue.

The Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), gave a brief summary of the Security Council's activities and encouraged the international community to implement the sanctions regime. This was followed by a statement by a founding member of the Women and Peace Studies Organization and a member of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan, Wazhma Frogh, who described the very difficult situation faced by women in Afghanistan.

All Security Council members spoke after the briefing. In addition, under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan took the floor. The representative of the European Union spoke under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure.

On 28 December, the Security Council issued a press statement condemning a terrorist attack in Kabul by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant that took place on the same date, resulting in 40 people killed and 80 injured. While expressing sympathy, the Council reaffirmed that terrorism constituted one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

Iraq

On 8 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2390 (2017), in which it concluded that all measures imposed by the Council in resolutions 1958 (2010) and 2335 (2016) pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations had been fully implemented by the parties. The United States took the floor after the adoption.

Lebanon

On 12 December, the Security Council discussed the situation in Lebanon at consultations of the whole under the item "Other matters" at the request of France. The French delegation gave a briefing on the outcomes of a ministerial meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon held in Paris on 8 December. On 19 December, the Council issued a press statement welcoming the return of the Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, to Lebanon and taking note of the agenda set out in the final declaration of the International Support Group in support of Lebanon. The Council reaffirmed the need to protect Lebanon from crises in the region and called upon all Lebanese parties to implement a policy of disassociation from any external conflicts.

Syrian Arab Republic

On 5 December, consultations of the whole were held on the Syrian Arab Republic under the item entitled "Other matters" to discuss humanitarian cross-border assistance. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator gave a briefing. Security Council members shared the view that humanitarian assistance through the United Nations was vital.

On 7 December, the Security Council held consultations of the whole on chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, briefed the Council. Council members reiterated their condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and discussed how the Council could ensure accountability.

On 19 December, the Security Council adopted resolution 2393 (2017) in order to renew the authorization of humanitarian access across borders and conflict lines to the Syrian Arab Republic until 10 January 2019. The resolution was adopted by 12 votes in favour, with 3 abstentions.

Following the vote, briefings and consultations of the whole were held on the humanitarian and political situations in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, expressed his disappointment that the political process in Geneva had not made any headway.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator reported that the humanitarian situation was still dire in many places in the Syrian Arabic Republic and urged the Security Council to do everything to ensure that 2018 would bring some relief to people's suffering.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 8 December, a briefing on the item was held following the announcement by the President of the United States of America on 6 December that the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and would move its embassy to that city from Tel Aviv. The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, reported that the position of the United Nations on the status of Jerusalem had not changed: it remained a final-status issue for which a comprehensive, just and lasting solution must be achieved through negotiations between the parties and on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and other agreements. Expressing concern at the potential risk of a violent escalation, he called upon all parties to refrain from engaging in provocative actions and rhetoric.

The representative of the United States said that her country's actions were intended to advance the cause for peace, while emphasizing that the United States was not predetermining final-status issues and that the specific dimensions of sovereignty over Jerusalem were still to be decided by the Israelis and the Palestinians

through negotiations. Other members stressed the importance of the international consensus on the status of Jerusalem, including relevant Security Council resolutions. Many members expressed concern about the potential impact of the announcement on the situation on the ground. Under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, the representatives of Israel and Jordan took part in the meeting and made statements. The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine to the United Nations also took part in the meeting and made a statement.

On 18 December, the Security Council held its monthly briefing and consultations on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Special Coordinator noted with regret that there had been no significant moves towards advancing peace and the parties were more divided than ever. He expressed concern over the growing risk that the parties might revert to more unilateral actions and noted that the situation had become more tense, with an increase in incidents in December. The United States, Uruguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia took the floor after the Special Coordinator.

Following the informal consultations of the whole, a vote was held on the draft resolution on the status of Jerusalem (S/2017/1060). Fourteen members of the Security Council voted in favour, but the resolution was not adopted because a permanent member voted against it.

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

On 12 December, a meeting with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was held, at which the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations gave a briefing.

On 14 December, the Security Council held consultations on UNDOF. The Assistant Secretary-General provided a briefing that was consistent with the report of the Secretary-General on UNDOF (S/2017/1024). Council members exchanged views on the situation on the ground and their assessment of the implementation of the UNDOF mandate, including the Force's plans to return to the area of separation as well as its technological requirements. The mandate renewal was also discussed. On 21 December, resolution 2394 (2017) was unanimously adopted, renewing the mandate of UNDOF until 30 June 2018.

Yemen

The Security Council held consultations of the whole on Yemen on 5 December. Briefings were given by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. Council members stressed that there was no military solution for Yemen and that an inclusive, negotiated political settlement must be reached. Members expressed their concern about the humanitarian situation and underscored the need for safe, rapid, unhindered and sustained humanitarian and commercial access.

On 22 December, the Security Council issued a press statement condemning the ballistic missile attack by the Houthis against Riyadh on 19 December. The Council called upon all Member States to implement the existing arms embargo and for the parties in Yemen to work together for a peaceful resolution to the conflict without preconditions.

Thematic issues and other matters

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

On 6 December, the Security Council held its semi-annual debate to discuss the work of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, with the participation of the President of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Carmel Agius, the President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Theodor Meron, and the Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Serge Brammertz. The President of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia said that judicial work had finished on 29 November and the Tribunal would close on 31 December, and that some of the Tribunal's work constituted points of no return that had forever changed the landscape of international justice. The President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals said that the work was ongoing and the fulfilment of the Residual Mechanism's mandate depended on support from the Council and Member States. The Prosecutor of the Residual Mechanism said that the expeditious conclusion of the trials and appeals transferred from the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia was a priority of his office. Croatia and Serbia also took the floor under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

Many Security Council members welcomed the accomplishments of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and called upon Member States to continue to offer support to the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. There was criticism, however, that the Tribunal had been unable to become an impartial and independent body.

On 31 December, the Security Council issued a press statement on the closure of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Council members stressed their ongoing determination to combat impunity for those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and called upon all States to cooperate with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, as set out in its Statute.

Maintenance of international peace and security

The Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/24) expressing grave concern about reports of migrants being sold into slavery in Libya. The Council strongly condemned such actions and called for investigations by all relevant authorities in order to bring the perpetrators to justice. The Council noted that the Government of National Accord of Libya had launched an investigation and committed itself to hold those responsible for these actions to account. The Council also underscored the need for coordination of efforts to tackle the root causes of large movements of people, including forced displacement, unmanaged migration and trafficking in persons, in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

Addressing complex contemporary challenges to international peace and security

On 20 December, the Security Council held an open debate to discuss how it could better address complex contemporary challenges to international peace and security. A total of 55 Member States and the European Union participated in the debate and shared their views on the issue.

The meeting started with a briefing by the Secretary-General, who noted that, while the world was seeing not only a quantitative but also a qualitative change in the nature of threats to international peace and security, efforts must be more coherent, coordinated and context-specific and work must be conducted across pillars and the peace continuum towards integrated action. He underlined his vision that prevention must be at the centre of everything the United Nations did. He also stressed that development was one of the best instruments of prevention, while respect for all human rights was an essential element. He expressed the view that gender perspectives and the concept of human security were useful tools in the context of prevention. He underscored the importance for the Security Council to be more systematic in preventing conflict and sustaining peace.

Participants acknowledged the emergence of complex contemporary challenges, many of which were cross-border in nature, and emphasized the increasing influence of more interlinked and mutually reinforcing threats. Participants underlined that the Security Council and other relevant United Nations bodies should take a more comprehensive and integrated approach to those challenges, taking into account that peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian elements were interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Participants stressed the importance of respect for the existing mandates of each United Nations organ, cooperation between the Council and other actors, better use of existing tools and the ongoing initiative of the Secretary-General to reform the peace and security architecture. Participants also affirmed the importance of continuing discussions, building upon the views expressed in the open debate.

Non-proliferation

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Security Council held a ministerial-level briefing under the item "Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea" on 15 December. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Taro Kono, presided over the meeting. The Secretary-General referred to the situation on the Korean Peninsula as the most tense and dangerous peace and security issue in the world today, expressing his deep concern at the risk of military confrontation. He reiterated his call upon the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with the relevant Council resolutions and allow space for the resumption of dialogue on denuclearization and sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula. He also called for the immediate re-establishment and strengthening of communication channels and stressed that diplomatic engagement was the only pathway to sustainable peace and denuclearization. Council members exchanged views on how to stop the nuclear and missile development programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea took the floor under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

On 22 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2397 (2017) to tighten restrictions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including through the further restriction of fuel imports, trade with other countries and the ability of citizens of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to work in foreign countries. In the resolution, the Council also reiterated its commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation. All Council members took the floor after the vote.

Islamic Republic of Iran

On 19 December, the Security Council held a briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015). The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the

Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations, Sebastiano Cardi, in his capacity as the Council facilitator for the implementation of the resolution, and the Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Joanne Adamson, in her capacity as Coordinator of the Joint Commission established by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, addressed the Council.

All Security Council member States took the floor. The representative of Germany also spoke under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

On 21 December, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/27) in which it expressed its intention to consider several elements related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace when reviewing the mandates and configuration of peacekeeping missions.

On the same day, the Security Council held a briefing to discuss United Nations peacekeeping operations, with a focus on force generation and gaps in capabilities. The Council heard from the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who stated that the adoption of resolution 2378 (2017) had demonstrated the Council's strong commitment to strategic force generation and touched upon the recommendations on filling capability gaps made in accordance with that resolution, as described in the letter from the Secretary-General (S/2017/1079). Many Council members emphasized the importance of ensuring that peacekeepers were well trained and adequately equipped.

On 21 December, the Security Council issued a press statement in which it recognized the importance of considering and managing the environmental impact of peacekeeping operations mandated by the Council.

Small arms

On 18 December, the Security Council heard a briefing from the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, on the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2017/1025). She said that the human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms ran deep and underlined the importance of tackling illicit trade in small arms. She also said that small arms were key determinants in the lethality and longevity of conflicts and that to invest in the effective management of small arms and light weapons was to invest in conflict prevention.

All Security Council members spoke, stressing the threat constituted by the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons and reiterating the importance of addressing the issue at all governance levels. Many members also highlighted that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was detrimental to efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Some delegations also shared their concern about the devastating impact on civilians of the use of small arms and light weapons and stressed that Governments should bear the primary responsibility of addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons.

Briefings by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council

On 8 December, the six outgoing non-permanent members (Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay) briefed the Council on the activities of the subsidiary bodies that they had chaired.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 21 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2395 (2017) to renew the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate until December 2021. In the resolution, the Council highlighted the need for strong coordination between the Directorate and the recently established Office of Counter-Terrorism, headed by a new Under-Secretary-General. Egypt, the Russian Federation and the United States took the floor to make statements after the vote.

On the same day, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2396 (2017) to address the problem of foreign terrorist fighters, especially those returning to their countries of origin or nationality and those relocating to third countries. In the resolution, the Council decided that all Member States were required to use advance passenger information and passenger name record data to stop terrorist travel. Member States were also required to collect biometric data and develop watch lists of known and suspected terrorists, including foreign terrorist fighters. The Council called upon Member States to take appropriate action with regard to suspected terrorists and their accompanying family members entering their territories, including by considering appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration measures in compliance with domestic and international law. It also called upon Member States to notify other countries of the travel, arrival, deportation or detention of individuals who they had reasonable grounds to believe were terrorists. After the vote, some Council members made statements.

United Nations S/2018/651

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 July 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 29 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for 28 and 29 June 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

18-11015 (E) 050718 060718

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Annex to the letter dated 29 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (28 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported three incidents of gunfire in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any incidents of gunfire.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Dayr al-Miyas, Suwayda' Governorate: 650 food parcels with a total weight of 3.8 tons were delivered to people in need.

In total, 1,847 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,701.96 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 119 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 85,046 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (29 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire: three in Aleppo Governorate and three in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any incidents of gunfire.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: one in Kafr Laha, Homs Governorate (650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.8 tons were delivered to people in need); and one in Mazlum, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate (650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.8 tons were delivered to people in need).

In total, 1,849 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,707.56 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 10 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/652

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 July 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 29 June 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to your letter dated 26 June 2018 (S/2018/627) concurring with my proposal to reappoint 23 judges of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

I have received a corresponding letter from the President of the General Assembly (see annex I). Accordingly, I am proceeding with the reappointment of the 23 judges of the Mechanism. A list of the judges is set out in annex II to the present letter.

In accordance with paragraph 2 of Security Council resolution 2269 (2016) of 29 February 2016, the judges will be reappointed for a two-year term commencing on 1 July 2018 and expiring on 30 June 2020.

I will also proceed to reappoint Judge Theodor Meron (United States of America) as President of the Mechanism from 1 July 2018 to 18 January 2019, and to appoint Judge Carmel Agius (Malta) as President of the Mechanism from 19 January 2019 to 30 June 2020.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

18-11013 (E) 060718

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Annex I

Letter dated 27 June 2018 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to your letter dated 22 June 2018 (S/2018/626) concerning the reappointment of 23 judges of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

Pursuant to article 10, paragraph 3, of the statute of the Mechanism, I am pleased to inform you that I hereby concur with the proposed reappointment of the 23 judges listed in the annex of that letter, for a term of two years, from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020, in line with the upcoming period of operation of the Mechanism.

(*Signed*) Miroslav **Lajčák**

Annex II

Judges of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Mr. Carmel A. Agius (Malta)

Mr. Jean-Claude Antonetti (France)

Ms. Florence Rita Arrey (Cameroon)

Mr. Ben Emmerson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Mr. Christoph Flügge (Germany)

Ms. Graciela Susana Gatti Santana (Uruguay)

Mr. Burton Hall (Bahamas)

Ms. Elizabeth Ibanda-Nahamya (Uganda)

Mr. Vagn Joensen (Denmark)

Mr. Gberdao Gustave Kam (Burkina Faso)

Mr. Liu Daqun (China)

Mr. Joseph E. Chiondo Masanche (United Republic of Tanzania)

Mr. Theodor Meron (United States of America)

Mr. Lee Gacuiga Muthoga (Kenya)

Ms. Aminatta Lois Runeni N'gum (Zimbabwe/Gambia)

Ms. Prisca Matimba Nyambe (Zambia)

Mr. Alphonsus Martinus Maria Orie (Netherlands)

Mr. Seymour Panton (Jamaica)

Mr. Seon Ki Park (Republic of Korea)

Mr. José Ricardo de Prada Solaesa (Spain)

Mr. Mparany Mamy Richard Rajohnson (Madagascar)

Mr. Ivo Nelson de Caires Batista Rosa (Portugal)

Mr. William H. Sekule (United Republic of Tanzania)

United Nations S/2018/653

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 July 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 5 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to attach herewith a press release of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sudan (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Omer Dahab Fadl **Mohamed**
Permanent Representative

18-11166 (E) 090718 110718

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Annex to the letter dated 5 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

The Sudan calls for adhering to the commitment to the exit in 2020 of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

In keeping with its national, regional and international commitments, the Government of the Sudan has continued to provide the assistance and facilities that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) needs to fulfil its mandate. The Sudan has been doing so from the time that the mission entered the country to the present through national and joint mechanisms operating at the level of the central Government and in the Darfur states. This has had a positive effect on the situation in Darfur, which has improved steadily thanks to a series of measures aimed at extending the authority of the State and promoting the rule of law. The most significant of those measures were the national weapon-collection campaign, increased presence of police and judicial institutions, community reconciliation and coexistence, and reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in order to bring the development that is needed.

In cooperation and coordination with the Government, UNAMID has executed phases one and two of its reconfiguration plan, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2363 (2017), which was preceded by a number of African Union communiqués and Security Council resolutions, and in accordance with the terms of reference of the exit strategy that the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations signed in February 2015.

Close cooperation and coordination between the Government and UNAMID has made it possible to avoid any relapses or setbacks in the areas from which the mission withdrew in the first and second phases. The Government of the Sudan would like to emphasize that the deployment of State institutions and the emergent social consensus should prevent any setbacks in areas where UNAMID is supposed to reduce its number or from which it will withdraw, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the report on the strategic review of UNAMID that was issued in this past June.

As everyone is aware, what the Darfur states truly need are reconstruction and development, the promotion of which would further the recommendations on peacebuilding support that are set out in resolution 2363 (2017). The international community must therefore make positive and tangible contributions in that regard, in keeping with its obligations and with the commitments that donors made at the Arab summit that was held in Doha in 2013. In addition, the United Nations country team in the Sudan must be given the funding it needs to implement projects that support peacebuilding.

The Government of the Sudan notes that the recommendations that were issued on 1 June 2018 by the team that conducted the strategic review of UNAMID include specific time frames for the exit of the mission in 2020. It furthermore notes that the African Union Peace and Security Council endorsed those recommendations at its 778th meeting on 11 June 2018. That notwithstanding, the Government notes that some parties have sought to impede the exit of UNAMID by the appointed date by sowing confusion and attempting to undermine the stability that has been achieved, citing clichéd arguments and spurious pretexts in order to circumvent the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué and the recommendations set out in the strategic review team's report.

The Government of the Sudan deplores these counterproductive efforts and reaffirms its readiness to continue cooperating with UNAMID and to facilitate the work of the mission and its exit in 2020.

(*Signed*) Qariballah **al-Khidr**
Ambassador
Official Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

United Nations S/2018/654

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 July 2018
English
Original: French

Letter dated 29 June 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit the following:

The Kingdom of Morocco expresses its astonishment and surprise that its concerns conveyed in its letter dated 5 June 2018, addressed to the Security Council, have not been taken into consideration. Indeed, a new letter from the "polisario" was circulated to the States members of the Council by the Presidency on 29 June 2018.

The Kingdom of Morocco wishes to recall that communications from non-State actors and armed groups such as the "polisario" may not be circulated, even informally, to the members of the Council.

Moreover, this new letter from the "polisario" doubly usurps status in an extremely grave manner:

(a) The letterhead fallaciously refers to the "frente polisario representation at the United Nations, New York". This reference is misleading and completely false because the "polisario" has no representation at the United Nations and the United Nations does not in any way recognize it as having such status.

(b) The signatory of the letter falsely claims to be the "representative of frente polisario at the United Nations". In this regard, it should be recalled that successive reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Security Council refer to him as the "representative of frente polisario in New York" (see S/2017/307, para. 22, and S/2018/277, para. 16). It is, therefore, clear that the United Nations absolutely does not accord him this status.

The Kingdom of Morocco urges that letters from non-State entities and armed groups, such as the "polisario", should under no circumstances be circulated directly, through the Presidency, to the members of the Security Council. What is at stake is respect for the rules of procedure and the practice of the Security Council as a principal intergovernmental organ of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the text of this letter to be circulated as a Security Council document.

(*Signed*) Omar **Kadiri**
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

18-11179 (E) 060718 090718

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United Nations S/2018/655

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 July 2018

Original: English

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 59 of Security Council resolution 2409 (2018). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the period from 27 March 2018 to 29 June 2018. The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); provides an overview of political developments following my previous update on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement (see S/2018/528); outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence as well as the pursuit of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians; and provides information on the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. Preparations for and disputes in relation to the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 23 December 2018 continued to dominate the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

3. On 25 May, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) concluded an independent audit of the voter register and issued a preliminary report, noting that the voter register was "inclusive, exhaustive and updated, but required improvements". OIF cited as a concern the fact that 16.6 per cent of voters — over 6.5 million — had been registered without all 10 fingerprints. Under Congolese law, the absence of fingerprint registration is not a reason to exclude voters, who can be identified by other means. OIF recommended that the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) publish the provisional lists as soon as possible.

4. On 28 May, five major political parties and platforms — including Union pour la démocratie et le progrès Social (UDPS), Dynamique de l'opposition, Union pour la nation congolaise (UNC), Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC), and Ensemble pour le changement — rejected the main conclusion of the audit and

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requested the removal from the voter register of individuals for whom no biometric data had been recorded, the publication of the voter list by registration centres, the replacement of the president of CENI and the replacement of the UDPS-nominated CENI rapporteur. In contrast, during a press conference held on 5 June, André Atundu, the spokesperson of the Majorité présidentielle, welcomed the conclusion of the OIF audit.

5. In addition to the criticisms relating to the integrity of the voter register, opposition parties and civil society groups continue to question the planned use of voting machines and the persistent lack of political space. On 5 June, in interviews with local media, Jean-Marc Kabund, the Secretary-General of UDPS, warned that the party's participation in upcoming polls could be conditional upon the resolution of concerns relating to the voter registry, the voting machine and the replacement of the CENI rapporteur.

6. Regarding the voting machines, the CENI sensitization campaign is ongoing in the country's 26 provincial capitals, where a total of 200 machines have been deployed. The campaign is scheduled to be expanded beyond those capitals in the coming weeks. On 7 June, CENI announced that, by the end of September, it will have received all 106,000 voting machines to be used during the elections. However, CENI is yet to communicate to MONUSCO a request for the delivery of the machines. The Mission's current plan is therefore based on the official request for logistical assistance shared by CENI on 30 November 2017. MONUSCO has notified CENI that the lack of clarity on and the late arrival of electoral materials, including voting machines, would reduce the time frame for deployment and require adjustments to logistical preparations.

7. In the meantime, on 8 June, the National Assembly adopted two amendments to the voter registration law and the electoral law, which effectively exclude Congolese living abroad from participating in the upcoming presidential elections, contrary to initial plans. Days before the vote, the president of CENI had noted that the enrolment of Congolese living abroad presented a significant logistical challenge. At the end of its ordinary session, which concluded on 15 June, Parliament did not, however, examine a proposed amendment to the current law on public demonstrations that had been tabled by the Government.

8. While the Government and CENI appear to be making progress in technical preparations for the elections, the implementation of the confidence-building measures provided for in the political agreement of 31 December 2016 continues to lag. The Government continued to restrict the activities of civil society organizations and journalists. By mid-June, some 118 political prisoners remained in detention. The ban on demonstrations and political gatherings has not been formally lifted. However, political opposition groupings have been able to hold public gatherings without incident over the past four weeks. On 9 June, Ensemble pour le changement, the political platform led by Moïse Katumbi, held a public meeting in Kinshasa which Mr. Katumbi addressed via video link.

9. Speculation around a possible referendum to amend the Constitution — including to allow the President, Joseph Kabila to run for another term — has persisted during the reporting period. Meanwhile, political parties both from the Majorité présidentielle and the opposition continue to form alliances and coalitions ahead of the 23 December polls. Whereas members of the Majorité présidentielle have pledged to promote a joint candidate for the presidential election, several political platforms of the opposition have designated their own candidates. In early June, the Majorité présidentielle and many political parties of the opposition serving in the Government established an electoral platform called Front commun pour le Congo (FCC). President Kabila was designated as the platform's "moral authority". In

response, some opposition parties denounced the creation of the platform, portraying it as a violation of the 31 December agreement.

10. On 7 June, Jean-Pierre Bemba, a former Vice-President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the founding president of the MLC political party, was acquitted by the appeal chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of earlier convictions for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Opposition parties, including UNC and the Ensemble political platform welcomed the acquittal as a positive development that would boost the ranks of the opposition at the upcoming elections.

11. External partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to express their willingness to support elections, while warning against further postponement. The African Union and OIF reiterated their availability to respond to any requests for expertise and other types of support.

12. On 28 May, during a press conference held in Paris, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, and the President of Angola, João Lourenço, called for the full implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, with the latter voicing his opposition to the possibility that President Kabila could run for a third term in office. This appeared to echo a statement, on 23 May, by President Macron, following a meeting with the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. In response, the Government in Kinshasa issued a strong protest, affirming the primacy of national sovereignty and rejecting foreign interference.

13. My Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Leila Zerrougui, continued to hold consultations with national stakeholders — including President Kabila, the Prime Minister, Bruno Tshibala, representatives of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, political parties and civil society — in line with her good offices mandate to build confidence in the political and electoral process. She also continued to undertake engagements at the regional level. In this connection, on 31 May she met with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Zachary Muburi-Muita. From 31 May to 2 June, she visited the Republic of the Congo and met with the President, Denis Sassou Nguesso, and with the Foreign Minister, Jean-Claude Gakosso, to discuss the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the implementation of the MONUSCO mandate.

14. On 30 April, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Saïd Djinnit, met the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, in Entebbe, Uganda, to exchange views on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as on regional relations. President Museveni deplored the continued insecurity in eastern Congo and called for the strengthening of governance in the country.

B. Economic developments

15. The country's macroeconomic framework stabilized, as inflation slightly decreased and the Congolese franc halted its depreciation, largely owing to an increase in commodity prices on international markets. In March the Government announced that its international reserves had once again exceeded $1 billion, after a period of decline. On 10 April, the Banque centrale du Congo lowered its 2018 economic growth forecast to 4.3 per cent, from a previous estimate of 5.2 per cent.

16. On 9 March, President Kabila promulgated the revised Mining Code, adopted by Parliament on 27 January. The code is aimed at raising State revenues through higher taxes and royalty payments on mining companies. On 29 March, the seven largest foreign mining companies operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo sent a communication to the Minister of Mines stating their objections to the law.

C. Security situation

17. The security situation deteriorated markedly in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, mainly because of renewed activities by Mai-Mai groups and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). In reaction, local populations repeatedly expressed their frustration with the national security forces and MONUSCO through a series of demonstrations and frequent stoning of MONUSCO patrols and bases.

18. By contrast, in Ituri and Tanganyika provinces, despite continued tensions, a significant decrease in major clashes was reported, prompting the return of some internally displaced persons to their homes. In a handful of other areas, including the Kasai region, the security situation was fluid.

19. In response, MONUSCO undertook a series of initiatives, including the employment of a total of 16 standing combat deployments, increased engagement with communities and stronger political outreach at the local level.

North Kivu and South Kivu provinces

20. In the Grand Nord area of North Kivu province, ADF continued to attack civilians, although at a lower level of intensity than that seen during the previous reporting period. The renewed ADF activities are likely linked to the operations of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) under way since January. From 12 to 17 April, ADF killed at least 12 FARDC personnel and injured more than 50 in attacks 6 km north of Semuliki. On 14 April, ADF surrounded a FARDC unit 12 km south-east of Mayimoya, prompting MONUSCO to dispatch attack helicopters to disperse the assailants. On 20 May, ADF attacked a FARDC position in Mayimoya, resulting in the deaths of 10 civilians. Four days later, the group attacked FARDC 25 km north-east of Mbau, resulting in the deaths of 12 FARDC soldiers and 16 ADF combatants. On 9 June, ADF conducted an attack on the road between Mabu and Ngite, killing two FARDC soldiers and wounding one. MONUSCO and FARDC responded jointly, with MONUSCO deploying troops and providing medical evacuation support to FARDC.

21. The deterioration of the security situation in the Grand Nord area, with attacks closer to Beni town, has led to rising frustration among the population, directed against the Government, security forces and MONUSCO. From 23 to 27 April, protests took place in Beni, including a women's protest with over 1,000 participants. In Rwangoma on 28 April, a MONUSCO patrol was stoned by at least 700 civilians, injuring several peacekeepers. On 12 May, a crowd in Boikene also stoned MONUSCO peacekeepers. In recent weeks the situation has improved somewhat, with lowering tensions observed. MONUSCO has undertaken significant community engagement in the area to listen to the concerns of the affected communities.

22. In the Petit Nord area of North Kivu, the security situation also deteriorated. Nyatura continued to engage in extortion and kidnapping. Attacks between armed groups increased or persisted, including between Nyatura and Nande Mai-Mai groups. On 9 April, five Virunga Park rangers and one driver were killed by Mai-Mai Charles. On 29 April, violence reached Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province, with an attack on the Mugunga neighbourhood. In what was allegedly a settling of scores relating to the illegal charcoal trade implicating Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura groups, 8 civilians were killed and 22 injured. On 11 May, Nyatura elements attacked a vehicle belonging to the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation, 27 km north of Goma, kidnapping two British tourists and killing one ranger. The tourists were later released and the Institute announced that the park would remain closed to tourism until at least 2019.

23. Masisi territory, also in North Kivu Province, has been marked by escalating tensions near Kitchanga within the Hunde ACPLS militia. On 18 April, nine APCLS and four Nyatura were killed. These incidents followed the assassination on 8 April, in Kitchanga, of a priest and local community leader who was instrumental in many community reconciliation projects.

24. In South Kivu Province, the situation remained volatile, with ongoing FARDC operations against the various Mai-Mai groups fighting under the banner of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba-led Conseil national du peuple pour la souveraineté au Congo, as well as against ethnic Bafulero Mai-Mai in the Ruzizi plain. The FARDC operations had some success, with Yakutumba largely withdrawing from strategic zones such as the Ubwari Peninsula and 600 elements from the allied Mai-Mai Malaika in Shabunda territory and in Maniema borderlands surrendering. However, many Yakutumba elements regrouped in the Itombwe forest and continued to attack FARDC, with a series of attacks launched from 27 April to 3 May.

25. On 24 May, a coalition of Mai-Mai groups led by Yakutumba launched a massive attack on the mining site of Salamabila, operated by the Canadian gold mining firm Banro, in neighbouring Maniema Province. During the assault, a FARDC camp was raided and looted. A reported 21 FARDC soldiers, two Congolese National Police officers, two civilians and 37 Mai-Mai elements were killed. The Raia Mutomboki factions also remained active and presented a constant threat to the protection of civilians in Shabunda territory.

26. Regional dynamics, including tensions in Burundi, have also contributed to a recent deterioration in the security situation in South Kivu. On 11 May, days before the Burundi referendum vote, armed elements attacked a border village in Burundi. It was later alleged that the attack was launched from the Ruzizi plain, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ituri and Tanganyika provinces

27. In Ituri province, the security situation improved in Djugu territory, with fewer violent incidents reported in recent weeks. Sporadic attacks on civilians persisted however and instances of low-level retaliatory attacks between Lendu and Hema were recorded. Some displaced persons and refugees have started to return to their homes.

28. In Irumu territory, also in Ituri province, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) continued to sporadically attack FARDC positions and to commit human rights abuses, including looting, summary executions and sexual violence. FARDC launched "Operation hero", from 22 to 25 May, against FRPI positions, killing seven FRPI elements.

29. In Aru and Mahagi territories, there were reports of the presence of armed ex-M23 elements. On 20 April, two alleged ex-M23 elements surrendered to FARDC in Mahagi while, on 23 April, two alleged ex-M23 elements were arrested by ANR in Aru.

30. Across Tanganyika province, intercommunity violence subsided and there was a general trend of return of internally displaced persons. However, insecurity remains acute around Bendera and in Nyunzu and Moba territories, where Mai-Mai groups frequently clash with security forces. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale elements, part of the South Kivu-based Mai-Mai Yakutumba alliance, as well as Twa militias, continue to ambush vehicles and clash with FARDC across the Nyunzu territory and around Bendera. On 13 April, a Mai-Mai group killed a FARDC officer at Kalolo village.

31. It was in this context that, on 11 May, a MONUSCO military convoy was surrounded south of Kongolo, also in Tanganyika Province, by presumed Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale. The 13 peacekeepers who constituted the convoy were taken to the Mai-

Mai camp. Eleven peacekeepers were released the following day. The two others were released on 16 May. At the time of reporting, weapons and ammunition taken from the peacekeepers have not been recovered.

Other provinces

32. In Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé provinces, the combined efforts of MONUSCO and FARDC led to a sharp reduction in LRA activities. The situation in South Sudan also continues to have ramifications for the security situation in that area. On 3 and 5 May, cross-border incursions and looting by South Sudanese elements were reported. Following a relative lull, tensions resumed between local communities and Mbororo cattle herders.

33. In Kasai region, until late April, the security situation had markedly improved. However, throughout May, a dissident wing of the family of Jacques Kabeya, a customary chief known as Kamuina Nsapu, committed a series of abuses across Dibaya territory, including the beheading of family members and associates of the customary chief.

34. Tensions have remained acute in Kamonia territory and in Kasai region, along the border area between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. In April, individuals of Luba and Lulua origin who had sought refuge in Angola continued to cross back into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where they were subsequently harassed by Bana Mura militia and, allegedly, also by Congolese security forces. The Bana Mura militia erected barriers to prevent Luba and Lulua from returning to their original areas, forcing them instead to relocate to neighbouring Kasai Central.

35. In Sud Ubangi province, one security incident affected the overall situation. On 23 April, alleged Enyele elements armed with machetes attacked a FARDC position in Mobambo, on the banks of the Ubangi River, killing two FARDC soldiers. On 24 April, another incident in the same area ended with four assailants killed and three captured by FARDC. The attack was allegedly in response to the arrest on 16 April of the nephew of Udjani Mangbama, the former leader of the Enyele rebellion. Following this attack, hundreds fled across the Ubangi river into the Republic of Congo. Boats capsized and at least 42 people drowned.

MONUSCO response

36. MONUSCO undertook a range of actions to respond to these threats, in line with its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians. In North Kivu province, in Rutshuru and Lubero territories, as FARDC reinforced its presence, MONUSCO intensified engagement with communities and local authorities, contributing to the return of an estimated 350 Hutu and Hunde/Nande families to their homes since mid-March.

37. In Lubero territory, MONUSCO sent a standing combat deployment to Kasugho in April to better understand the protection threats in the area and support investigation into grave human rights violations. A female engagement team was deployed to engage with women and other members of the community.

38. In Beni territory, MONUSCO intensified patrolling and engagement with the community and the authorities to address growing resentment of perceived inaction by FARDC and MONUSCO with regard to protecting civilians from attacks by alleged ADF. MONUSCO has also engaged with FARDC to improve coordination in the conduct of joint operations against ADF. The Mission has provided aerial support to FARDC, coordinated its response with FARDC to ADF attacks, and provided medical evacuation support when needed.

39. In Djugu territory, Ituri Province, MONUSCO deployed three standing combat deployments in response to the upsurge in violence and helped establish 36 community alert networks in villages around Lita, Blukwa and Fataki. On at least two occasions, the networks were successful in reporting cases of potential intercommunity violence between Lendu and Hema, to which the Congolese National Police and MONUSCO responded successfully. Alert networks also played a key role in raising awareness among the Hema and Lendu communities of peaceful coexistence to minimize any recurrence of violence. Three standing combat deployments remain deployed in Djugu territory, namely in Katoto, Libi and Blukwa, ensuring protective patrolling and area security, thereby enabling displaced persons to return to their areas of origin.

40. MONUSCO supported a major provincial dialogue effort in Bunia, where Hema and Lendu communities were brought together from 1 to 22 June to agree on peaceful coexistence. These actions by MONUSCO, as well as the deployment of an additional 1,300 FARDC and Congolese National Police personnel to the area, have contributed to a reduction in violence since April.

41. In South Kivu, MONUSCO responded to threats to civilians, in particular women and girls, posed by Raia Mutomboki factions by increasing long-range patrols to the area, and by engaging community leaders to transmit dissuasive messages to the armed groups. In mid-June, MONUSCO established a standing combat deployment in Kigulube to investigate serious allegations of mass rapes perpetrated by Raia Mutomboki.

42. Also in South Kivu, two days after the attack by Mai-Mai Yakutumba on the Banro mining site in Salamabila on 24 May, MONUSCO deployed a standing combat deployment. In close cooperation with the Sukola II FARDC command in Bukavu, MONUSCO engaged locally with the civilian population, FARDC and other stakeholders in an effort to improve the security situation in and around Salamabila. By mid-June, the situation had calmed significantly, with a reported decrease in the number of violations.

43. Across Tanganyika province, as intercommunity violence subsided and internally displaced persons returned, MONUSCO intensified its facilitation of intercommunity dialogue, continued to establish traditional peace committees, reinforced the early warning systems and implemented six community violence reduction projects. As a result, more than 800 displaced households returned to their villages in April. In Kongolo, with the closure of the base, MONUSCO reinforced the capacities of local protection actors, who have taken ownership of protection tools and mechanisms.

44. In Haut-Katanga province, MONUSCO strengthened local capacities to address the Bantu-Twa conflict, a serious protection threat in Pweto territory. MONUSCO held two capacity-building workshops, on 3 and 4 May and 13 and 14 June, on conflict resolution, mediation and dialogue between the Bantu and Twa communities, under the lead of the provincial Ministry of Interior. Consultations were also held in Pweto in April with Bantu-Twa leaders to identify conflict drivers and suitable solutions for peaceful coexistence in view of an upcoming structured dialogue.

45. In Lubumbashi, in cooperation with the Congolese National Police, MONUSCO is expanding its community policing initiatives.

46. In the Kasai region, MONUSCO continued to provide technical and logistical support to the Consultative Commission for the Resolution of Customary Conflicts, with the training of local committees extended into the five territories of Kasai Central. In Kamonia territory, the Mission continued to work with provincial authorities to ensure the safe release of the women and children hostages held by Bana Mura

militias. MONUSCO has verified 92 cases, out of which 24 were released (13 girls, 11 boys).

47. More broadly, MONUSCO continued the reconfiguration of its footprint and presence on the ground During the reporting period, MONUSCO deployed a total of 16 standing combat deployments, including joint civilian/military missions in North Kivu, Kasai and Maniema. These deployments were undertaken to respond to violence or threats, support investigations into human rights violations and engage with local leaders and communities to reduce tensions and resolve conflicts.

48. MONUSCO will review these deployments, continue to improve its systems to enable more effective projection and adjust to the challenges identified. Further adjustments to the Mission's footprint and operations will be contingent upon the financial resources provided to MONUSCO for the 2018–2019 period.

49. The MONUSCO Community Alert Network transmitted 505 early warning alerts per month, mainly in North and South Kivu and Tanganyika, with a response by the Government and/or MONUSCO in 93 per cent of cases.

Mission-wide strategies

50. During the reporting period, MONUSCO supported the Government in developing an action plan for the negotiated surrender of members of FRPI, the most active armed group in Ituri province. The plan covers aspects such as ceasefire, disarmament, cantonment, reinsertion and reintegration.

51. The Mine Action Service continued to support the protection of civilians in the field through explosive hazard management support for MONUSCO and FARDC operations, in addition to disposing of more than 2.9 tons of obsolete ammunition belonging to the Congolese National Police in Kinshasa.

52. MONUSCO provided technical and logistical support to prosecutors inspecting Congolese National Police detention facilities, resulting in the release of 86 detainees in illegal or prolonged detention and the transfer of another 162 cases to the competent authority for further proceedings.

53. MONUSCO continued to reinforce 12 priority high-risk prisons by implementing the action plan developed in collaboration with national and provincial authorities. In line with the plan, MONUSCO supported the Government in minimizing the risk of mass prison escapes by improving the security alert system and the digitalization of prisoner databases, with a focus on high-risk/dangerous prisoners.

D. Humanitarian situation

54. The humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo persists. A total of 13.1 million persons remain in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Among them are 4.5 million internally displaced persons, including 2.2 million who have been forced into displacement over the past six months. As at 31 May, there were 772,052 refugees and asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa.

55. In response, the humanitarian community has made efforts to meet this increase in life-saving needs. On 13 April, during a humanitarian donor conference in Geneva, international donors pledged $528 million to support the delivery of urgent assistance. As at early June, the actual level of funds disbursed remained low, with the 2018 humanitarian response plan having received only $276.9 million for 2018, representing 17 per cent of funding requirements.

56. Efforts were also made to scale up the emergency response, notably in the crisis areas with large capacity gaps prioritized for the level-3 emergency response (Kasai Region, South Kivu, and Tanganyika). In these areas, more than 1.4 million people received humanitarian aid from October 2017 to February 2018. As a result, and as initially planned, the level 3 emergency response for these regions was deactivated on 20 April. It had been in effect for six months.

57. Humanitarian actors continue to face security-related impediments. A total of 164 security incidents affecting humanitarian aid were reported in the first quarter of 2018, an increase of 10 per cent as compared with the previous quarter.

58. On 8 May, the Government announced an outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Equateur province. The epidemic subsequently spread, including to Mbandaka, the provincial capital. By 19 June, the number of cases stood at 62, including 38 confirmed cases, 4 of them in Mbandaka, a city of over 1 million inhabitants. Overall, 28 deaths related to the outbreak were registered.

59. Since the declaration of the outbreak, the United Nations system and specialized non-governmental organizations, under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO), have been providing significant support to the Government in containing the disease outbreak, with very encouraging results.

60. The Government-led response strategy consists of a combined approach. The first pillar relates to the provision of improved health services (treatment free of charge, vaccinations and soon a limited quantity of antivirals) to encourage people in the affected areas to present themselves for medical care. The second pillar is the implementation of a public safety approach, which involves screening at strategic locations.

61. MONUSCO contributed to the response by the Government to the outbreak of Ebola in Equateur province. By late May, the Mission had redeployed 13 staff to Mbandaka to assist with the establishment of an emergency operational centre and oversee the delivery of the Mission's logistical support. MONUSCO has established a 20-person camp in Iboko and has redeployed a fixed-wing aircraft to Kinshasa and a rotary-wing aircraft to Mbandaka. It has used its C-130 aircraft to transport cargo for WHO and the Ministry of Health. This urgent and unplanned effort has forced the Mission to reprioritize the use of resources.

62. The funding requirements for the response to the Ebola outbreak currently amount to $57 million. This figure has already been fully pledged by multilateral and bilateral donors. The current phase remains crucial in determining whether a further spread of the epidemic, notably to other urban centres and adjacent countries, can be prevented. The Government and WHO are strengthening the capacity of priority health centres in Kinshasa, some 600 km away, to ensure an adequate level of preparedness for the eventuality that the disease outbreak spreads there.

E. Human rights situation, including sexual violence and child protection

63. MONUSCO documented 1,183 human rights violations in April and May 2018, an increase as compared with the same period last year (837 violations) and compared with February and March 2018 (931 violations). Of these violations, 79 per cent occurred in conflict-affected provinces and half of these took place in North Kivu province alone, where the human rights situation is of great concern.

64. Of all violations throughout the country, State agents were responsible for approximately 64 per cent and armed groups for 36 per cent of all violations. In April

and May, 191 persons, including at least 29 women, were the victims of extrajudicial killings or summary executions (with 58 victims attributed to State agents and 133 to armed groups) and more than 1,209 persons, including 155 women and 14 children, were illegally deprived of their liberty by State agents and armed groups. While some demonstrations were held without incident, restrictions on democratic space continued to impede the establishment of an environment conducive to credible, peaceful and transparent elections. Some 57 violations were linked to restrictions to fundamental freedoms and political rights, including the prevention of peaceful demonstrations or political meetings, acts of intimidation, threats and arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society activists and members of political parties.

65. Gérard Mulumba, a former member of parliament and vocal critic of the Government, and his co-defendant Isaac Kabundi saw their sentences confirmed by the district court in Kinshasa. They had both been sentenced in the first instance to 18 months in prison for insulting the President and to one month in prison for public abuse in a social media message that the defendants had exchanged. Three Lutte pour le changement activists who had been arrested while urging people to demonstrate on 31 December 2017 in Kisangani, Tshopo Province, were sentenced on 27 April to six months for "spreading false rumours".

66. Some progress was made towards the implementation of confidence-building measures as provided for in the 31 December 2016 agreement, but serious challenges remain. As at early June, at least 121 political prisoners or prisoners of opinion remained in detention throughout the country. Five activists of the citizens' movement Filimbi, arrested in December 2017 and detained by intelligence services for over five months, without judicial oversight, were transferred to Makala prison on 9 June and prosecuted for insulting the Head of State, threatening State security and inciting civil disobedience.

67. MONUSCO continued to support efforts by the Congolese authorities to fight impunity in addressing cases of international crimes and serious human rights violations against both State and non-State actors. MONUSCO assistance included the development of prosecutorial strategies and witness support to help the authorities meet international human rights standards and due process in investigations and prosecutions of such cases. The Mission is focusing on 38 priority cases in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri.

68. As a result of these efforts, on 28 April, the Military Court of South Kivu sentenced FARDC Lieutenant Colonel Maro Ntumwa, also known as *Marocain*, to a 20-year prison term for crimes against humanity and war crimes, pillage and attacks on civilians, committed in Kalehe territory, between 2005 and 2007.

69. MONUSCO is also supporting the national authorities in the Sheka trial, including through the erection of an ad hoc detention cell and courtroom in Goma. Similarly, the Mission is supporting the joint investigation by both civilian and military justice authorities into crimes allegedly committed in Djugu between December 2017 and March 2018 in the context of intercommunal violence between Hema and Lendu groups.

70. The successful prioritization strategy in these three provinces is being replicated elsewhere. In the Kasais, led by MONUSCO, military justice authorities have now agreed on a list of priority cases, and a similar process is beginning in Tanganyika province. At least 93 suspects have been arrested and questioned, while 115 victims and witnesses, including 17 minors, have been interviewed.

71. MONUSCO pursued efforts to improve the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, including through field visits and other awareness-raising activities. Measures have

been taken to avoid cases of non-compliance with the Policy, especially in the context of jointly planned military operations with FARDC.

Sexual violence

72. In April and May, MONUSCO documented cases of rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence committed against at least 98 women and 18 children, confirming an increasing trend. Raia Mutomboki in South Kivu — the most affected province — are the main perpetrators. State agents were responsible for 42 cases (33 by FARDC soldiers, 7 by Congolese National Police agents and 2 by other State actors). MONUSCO continued its advocacy efforts with the relevant authorities to curb this trend.

Child protection

73. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 292 grave violations against children. At least 240 children (14 girls, 226 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups, mainly from Mai-Mai Mazembe (68), Nyatura (59), and FDLR-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (25), mostly in North Kivu (203). A total of 18 girls survived rape and other forms of sexual violence, mostly by FARDC (7) and Raia Mutomboki (6), in North Kivu (9), South Kivu (6), Ituri (2) and Kasai (1). Some 24 children (9 girls, 15 boys) were killed (7) or maimed (17), mostly by Kamuina Nsapu (13) and FARDC (9), in Kasai (14) and North Kivu (9), and 9 children (3 girls, 6 boys) were abducted by ADF (5), Mai-Mai Mazembe (3) and Nyatura (1), all in North Kivu. During the period, one school was attacked by FRPI combatants in Ituri.

III. Deployment of MONUSCO and implementation of its mandate

A. Strategic dialogue and exit strategy

74. MONUSCO continues its transition planning to increase national ownership and a progressive transfer of tasks prior to its phased exit. The Mission also continues to adjust its footprint and streamline civilian tasks towards this objective.

B. Support for the 31 December 2016 political agreement and elections

75. The Mission leadership continued to pursue its good offices for the implementation of an inclusive, credible and timely electoral process and continued to advocate for the conclusion of discussions on the revised Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo (PACEC).

76. MONUSCO continued to provide technical support to CENI, notably in relation to preparations for the forthcoming opening of the registration and processing centres for the provincial election candidacies. MONUSCO is completing the colocation of its electoral experts at the CENI headquarters, while several electoral experts have been redeployed to strengthen the Mission's support for CENI at the provincial level. MONUSCO also continued to raise the need for further progress in the implementation of the agreed confidence-building measures.

77. During the reporting period, MONUSCO further engaged with the relevant authorities on the need to demonstrate tangible progress on the implementation of the confidence-building measures and the opening of political space, observing that,

while progress was being realized in some areas, in others, in particular in relation to detentions, more attention may be required. MONUSCO continued to advocate with the Government and key national stakeholders to revise presidential decree 05/026 (2005) relating to the electoral process security plan.

78. In addition, the Mission updated its existing joint mission plan to prevent and mitigate elections-related violence and directed the review and exercise of plans at the field office level. Given its limited resources, the vast area that it has to cover and the broad spectrum of threats to civilians, the Mission continues to focus primarily on efforts to prevent and mitigate elections-related violence, including through preventive political engagement, monitoring and advising the Congolese National Police on crowd control management, and human rights monitoring and reporting.

C. Other mandated tasks

1. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration/disarmament, demobilization repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

79. From April to June, MONUSCO registered the surrender of 37 children associated with armed groups and 20 adult combatants from Congolese armed groups, with 18 of the adults entering the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. In addition, the Mission registered and repatriated 31 foreign combatants and dependants during the reporting period.

80. MONUSCO made progress in implementing its community violence reduction projects. The projects consisted of labour-intensive employment, countering sexual and gender-based violence, child protection, sustainable livelihoods creation, or revenue generation initiatives specific to women.

2. Stabilization

81. MONUSCO continued to support the operationalization, under the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, of six targeted stabilization interventions, which focus on the root causes of conflicts in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, with funding from the multi-donor $40 million Stabilization Coherence Fund. On 10 April, the Fund allocated $1 million to support stabilization initiatives in the territory of Djugu, focusing mainly on community reconciliations and the restoration of State authority.

3. Progress on adjustments of MONUSCO priorities, posture and presence

82. In line with the prioritization outlined in resolution 2409 (2018), MONUSCO continued to streamline its civilian efforts, focusing primarily on the protection of civilians, as well as support for the political process, including electoral support.

83. During the reporting period, MONUSCO finalized its planned Mission laydown for the coming 2018–19 period, through elections. This planning exercise was a result of comprehensive civilian, police and military coordination, with the final laydown based on a careful analysis of protection of civilians concerns and threats; considerations related to the safety of peacekeepers, including proximity to medical infrastructure in line with United Nations policy; and critical supply lines, including a consideration of electoral hubs and hotspots for the coming period.

84. Once the Mission's budget for the financial year 2017–2018 has been adopted, and if the additional rapidly deployable battalions can be generated for deployment on time, MONUSCO plans to base its fourth and fifth battalions in the Tanganyika province and the Kasais, respectively. Once these battalions are deployed, the

Mission's sectoral boundaries will be redrawn, to ensure ease of command and control and to align force sectors with field office areas of responsibility.

85. On the assumption that the incoming rapidly deployable battalions will be deployed on time, and that the Mission will be provided with the required financial resources, MONUSCO is already in the process of repatriating 1,700 troops by 31 August 2018 to make way for the incoming battalions. The Mission had closed four static company operating bases by the end of the reporting period, and was in the process of closing a further seven. More bases will be closed in the coming months, as the Mission continues to make its protection through projection concept a reality.

86. Meanwhile, a joint United Nations-Southern African Development Community task force was established during the reporting period to assess the Intervention Brigade of the force. Following a series of exchanges in New York and in Goma, including with relevant authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it was determined that the Intervention Brigade would be reconfigured to make it more flexible, agile and able to conduct both offensive and protection of civilians operations across North Kivu. Two infantry battalions will be reduced to allow the generation of additional enablers that would improve manoeuvrability and enhance effectiveness. Additional enablers to be generated or reconfigured include a special force company, a strengthened intelligence cell and a composite utility/attack helicopter unit. The reconfigured Intervention Brigade is expected to be fully operational by 30 September.

87. Some adjustments are also planned to the current laydown of the Mission's formed police units, which are to provide protection for civilians and United Nations staff and premises, in key urban hotspots. Minor adjustments to field office locations continued through the reporting period, with a view to ensuring that priority field offices had the necessary resources.

4. Assessment of performance of uniformed personnel

88. During the reporting period MONUSCO observed no notable cases of failure to implement the mandate by uniformed personnel. However, the Mission is currently investigating a recent incident during which some of its troops may have underperformed. The conclusions of this inquiry will be communicated to the Council.

5. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

89. MONUSCO continues to enforce the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse among all personnel. A total of 10 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse received within the reporting period were duly assessed and reported, for onward referral to the appropriate investigations entities for action. The Mission continues to implement sexual exploitation and abuse preventive measures, including training for personnel, poster campaigns, risk assessment and advisory visits to base camps, Military Police deterrent patrols to enforce curfew and the non-fraternization policy for uniformed personnel.

6. Gender considerations in mandate implementation

90. During the reporting period, the Mission's stabilization programmes allocated 15 per cent of their budgets to gender equality interventions. MONUSCO prioritized funds for women as part of its efforts to mediate land conflicts in Ituri province. As a result, one third of the 160 beneficiaries of 212 hectares, allocated over recent months, were women.

91. In its efforts to improve gender responsiveness in the protection of civilians, MONUSCO persuaded a group of women in South Kivu to lay down their weapons

and use peaceful means to help protect their communities. The group, known as "Wa Mama Tujigombowe" ("Let us free ourselves"), had taken up arms to ensure the security of its members. MONUSCO has subsequently provided training to the women on ways to ensure their security, including through the use of the Mission's community alert networks.

92. In March and May, PACEC, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and MONUSCO organized workshops in Tanganyika and Haut-Katanga on women and elections, to support potential female candidates to prepare for the elections. MONUSCO also supported 40 political women prospective candidates, in April and June, in developing a strategy to secure the commitment of the leadership of their political parties' to put more female candidates on their electoral lists.

IV. Safety and Security of United Nations personnel

93. From 1 March to 8 June 2018, 202 security- and safety-related incidents affecting United Nations personnel, uniformed components, assets and operations were recorded throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These include 84 crime-related incidents, 33 incidents of civil unrest, 71 hazard-related cases and 14 incidents linked to armed conflict.

94. In the Beni area, military operations against ADF have contributed to the risk against United Nations personnel, premises and assets. Humanitarian access to some areas remains a challenge due to the recurrent ADF attacks in the interior of Beni territory and areas near Beni town. On occasions, movement of United Nations personnel has been suspended or restricted, owing to risks associated with ADF attacks.

V. Observations

95. Six months before the holding of crucial presidential and legislative elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continued progress has been made in their preparation. To date, key milestones in the electoral calendar are being reached, albeit not without challenges. The finalization of the voter register, the promulgation of the law on the distribution of seats, and the audit of the voter register are all important steps in the right direction. However, much more needs to be done to foster greater confidence in the process and guarantee that these highly anticipated polls are inclusive, free, credible, peaceful and in line with the Constitution. To achieve this critical objective, the confidence-building measures provided for in the 31 December 2016 agreement must be fully implemented. Once more, I call upon the Government to live up to its commitments in this regard.

96. Infringements on the freedom of expression — notably for journalists and civil society activists, as well as political opponents — do not contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to credible and inclusive elections. I welcome the Government's consent to the holding of the rally of Ensemble pour le changement on 9 June in Kinshasa, following the UDPS rally on 24 April, also in Kinshasa. I deeply regret, however, that these tentative steps are yet to be replicated across the country. I urge the Congolese authorities to lift the ban on public demonstrations so that the Congolese people can fully enjoy their legitimate political and civil rights in accordance with the Constitution. It is also critical that the authorities hold accountable the perpetrators of human rights violations, irrespective of their rank or affiliation, and put an end to illegal prolonged unlawful detention by the intelligence services.

97. The electoral process is marked by divergence of views among national stakeholders. In recent weeks, this situation has been fuelled by disagreements over the planned use of voting machines, a lack of confidence in the voter registry and disputes related to the list of political parties issued by the Ministry of Interior. I urge all political actors from the Majorité présidentielle and from the opposition, as well as civil society groups, to continue to work relentlessly and in a spirit of compromise, to find the most practical, satisfactory and consensual solutions to these issues with the sole aim of ensuring the timely holding of inclusive, free and credible elections, in line with the Constitution. I call upon all the country's partners and countries of the region to continue to provide the necessary assistance and to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve this goal.

98. The lack of a clear disbursement plan for the funding of the polls remains a source of concern. Delayed, inconsistent and irregular disbursements of Government funds to CENI could adversely affect electoral timelines and spark new tensions. I strongly urge the Government to abide by its commitments to fund the upcoming polls in a timely manner.

99. I am deeply troubled by the marked increase in armed group activities in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces and its devastating impact on the security of civilian populations. I call upon the authorities to redouble their efforts — in particular their political outreach towards armed groups and communities — in close coordination with MONUSCO to reduce and end the threat posed to civilians. The Congolese authorities, with the support of MONUSCO, must spare no efforts in building on and consolidating the recent pause in major clashes in Ituri and in Tanganyika, in particular. No window of opportunity for durable peace, however small, must be allowed to close.

100. The humanitarian situation, driven by continued insecurity, remains of grave concern. I welcome the $528 million pledged by international donors to support the delivery of urgent aid to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, it is of utmost importance that pledges be promptly disbursed and funding gaps addressed immediately, to enable an adequate response to humanitarian needs. I call upon the Government to do its utmost to ensure a safe and secure environment for the population and to allow for unrestrained access to people in need of humanitarian assistance.

101. The current Ebola outbreak in Equateur Province, in the north-eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is different from the previous seven that the country has experienced. The risk is higher owing to the danger of transmission along the riverine route towards Kinshasa, Kisangani, the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo. The response is larger in scale and more sophisticated, including with the rapid surge deployment by the United Nations system, notably WHO, and th availability of the vaccine, as well as antivirals. Much has been done in recent weeks to contain the outbreak, but vigilance must be maintained. I commend the leadership of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its swift and decisive response to the outbreak, and I am grateful for the support and assistance provided by donors and partners to help treat the victims and prevent the spread of the disease.

102. Finally, I wish to thank my Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, for her leadership and all personnel of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team for their dedication to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as to regional organization, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations, for their invaluable support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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Letter dated 28 June 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council:

- Letter from Sidi Omar, Representative of the Frente POLISARIO at the United Nations

(*Signed*) Linda **Scott**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

18-10905 (E) 050718

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Annex to the letter dated 28 June 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my authorities, I have the honour to write to you regarding the paragraphs related to our country, Western Sahara, contained in the report of the Secretary-General S/2018/623, entitled "Comprehensive approach to mine action", submitted to the Security Council in implementation of its resolution 2365 (2017) of 30 June 2017.

In paragraph 14, the report states that "During the reporting period, the Mine Action Service cleared contamination from more than 5 km^2 of land, enabling the nomadic and local populations living in the area to move freely with their livestock and allowing United Nations military observers to monitor *the ceasefire between the Royal Moroccan Army and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro*" (italics added).

The phrase referring to "*the ceasefire between the Royal Moroccan Army and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro*" is at variance with the terms enunciated in the report of the Secretary-General S/21360 of 18 June 1990, which was approved by Security Council resolution 658 (1990) of 27 June 1990. It also diverges from the language employed in subsequent reports of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, including the reports of the Secretary-General S/1998/35 of 15 January 1998 (para. 17) and S/1999/307 of 22 March 1999 (para. 11), which have been approved by the Security Council in its successive resolutions on the matter. Furthermore, the above-mentioned phrase clearly departs from the terms of the Military Agreement No. 1, which was signed by the two parties, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in 1997 and 1998, respectively, in which reference is clearly made to "an agreement between the Royal Moroccan Army (RMA) and the Frente POLISARIO Military Forces (FPMF)".

In view of the above, I would like to call on you to ensure that reference to the ceasefire agreement and the designation of the troops of the two parties to the conflict, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, is strictly consistent with the language that has been agreed on by the two parties and approved by the Security Council.

In this regard, I would like to call on you to ensure that the troops of the Frente POLISARIO in the above-mentioned report and all official United Nations documents on the matter are consistently referred to as "the Frente POLISARIO Military Forces" or "the Frente POLISARIO Forces".

In paragraph 48 of the report, reference is made to "the *territory* of Western Sahara" (italics added). Recalling that Western Sahara is officially included on the United Nations agenda as a Non-Self-Governing Territory since 1963, I would like to request that the word "territory" be capitalized as in paragraph 14 of the report or, alternatively, that the Territory be described in line with its designation by the General Assembly, namely, the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.

(*Signed*) Sidi M. **Omar**
Representative of the Frente POLISARIO
at the United Nations